

MORE BAD GUYS

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games



**A nefarious M&M Superlink sourcebook
by James Thomson**

MORE BAD GUYS

by James Thomson
With Additional Material by John Polojac
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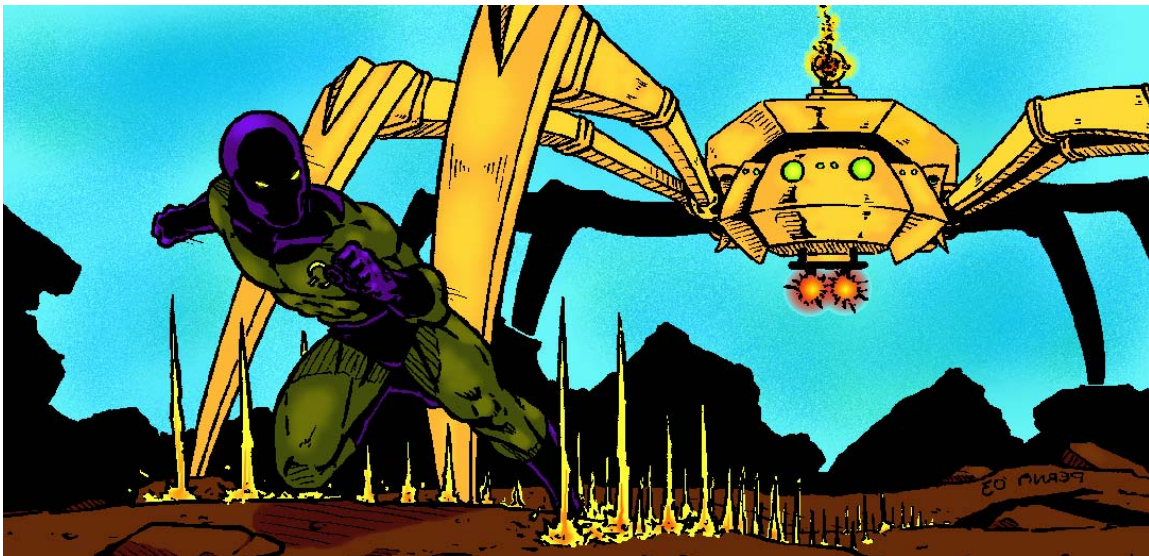
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INTRODUCTION



Don't you wish you had more villainy in your life? Well then congratulations on your purchase; you've come to the right place. This handy compendium of evil contains more than forty supervillains and more than a hundred adventure outlines, to serve all your needs for crime. From snarling street trash to cackling Cosmic Evil, we have every kind of villain you could possibly want and more! Five complete teams, dozens of independent villains—that's enough fiends, freaks, megalomaniacs and mutations to keep your players busy for years to come. It's time to seize the plunger of villainy and unblock the stubborn clog called justice!

USING THIS BOOK

The villains in this book are organized by power level, rather than in alphabetical order. We start with the weakest, and move up to the most dangerous. I've tried to give you as many low-level villains as I can, since they seem to be in short supply among the other Superlink sourcebooks I've seen, but I've also included a real world-eater or two.

After the individual villains we have five supervillain teams, which have also been organized from weakest to strongest.

The last team, the "Legion of the Damned" is an experimental concept—a supervillain team so hideously powerful that almost no PC superhero group will be able to defeat them directly. PCs will have to use cunning and guile to thwart their schemes.

At first glance, this book may look like a mishmash of different styles. The characters are designed not just for different PLs, but for different types of play entirely. This is intentional. Most GM's don't limit themselves to a single style or level of play—they need different types of NPCs for different types of adventures. So, to make this book as useful as possible, I've tried to give you villains with as wide a range of abilities and combat styles as I could. Some are gritty, some are lighthearted, but most can be both, depending on how you play them. If you need a sympathetic villain, I have some for you. If you need a villain who's utterly, totally evil, I have them too. If you need one who's complex and morally gray, I have them as well. Honorable villains? Got 'em. Despicable villains? Got 'em. Low lethality opponents? We have them. High-lethality opponents? We have them too. We have villains weak enough for a team of super-kids to take down and ones who are so tough that you'd do better to try

foiling their schemes at a safe distance. There's a team that's so flimsy that the PCs' main challenge in defeating them will be to keep from hurting them too much (and just to keep the PCs mindful of this, I've made them all grade-school kids) and another one that's so tough no group of PCs could reasonably be expected to defeat it in a direct fight.

Could you use all of these NPCs in the same campaign? Sure, but you don't have to. I want this book to be a jumbled toybox of evil that you can reach into and grab whatever kind of villain works best for a particular occasion.

With all this said, I can't entirely escape my own personal writing style. If you've read any of my fiction or any of my other gaming books, from *The Maze of Screaming Silence* onwards, you already know that I have a very specific take on the subject of superheroes. Is it possible to completely suppress my own individual creative predilections? Probably not (and anyway you wouldn't want me to, since that would hobble my inspiration). So no matter how hard I try to make these characters generic, they will always tend to be more gritty than four-color, more likely to show moral shades of gray than solid blacks and whites, to show more influence from guys like Grant Morrison and Alan Moore than guys like Chris Claremont and John Byrne. But if your take on the genre is warmer and sunnier than mine, I still want you to be able to use this book.

Of course, a lot depends on how you use a character. Even a murderous maniac like the Aleph could be played in a four-color style. Depending on how you set up the scenario, he doesn't actually have to do anything shocking. The PCs can be aware of his fearsome reputation, but you can keep the details non-specific enough that it won't be too "dark" and negative for your game.

The same applies to lethality. A sick freak like Doctor Frightful might very well strike a hero with the intention of killing them, but there is no reason why he has to. His sinister medical experiments are gross and vile in the extreme, if you describe them in detail to the PCs. But you don't need to—

maybe he doesn't happen to have anyone tied down on the operating table when the PCs break into his lair, or maybe these days he's experimenting with diabolical serums rather than messy surgical procedures.

As much as possible I've tried to write the character descriptions so that you can play them each in a variety of different ways. I hope that I've succeeded. And one of the nice things about RPGNow is that you get to tell me if I haven't.

THE CAMPAIGN WORLD

There still isn't one. I've taken a lot of comments about the first book, and while readers had complaints about everything from my politics to the layout of my stat-blocks, one of the few things that everyone seemed to think I'd gotten right was not developing a specific game-world. To make these books as useful as possible, I want you to be able to fit these characters into any existing campaign.

There are places where an adventure seed makes reference to another villain in this book, but that's as close as I come to having any kind of interconnected back-story. Even then, I've tried to make it easy to substitute some other NPC if it would fit your campaign world better. There are one or two places where I suggest that a character from the previous book ("The Bad Guys") would fit neatly into an adventure, but these are only presented as options—you don't need anything but a copy of the M&M core book to get full use out of this volume.

I've also tried to avoid giving characters origins that would cause significant changes to your campaign world. Nobody here has an origin that insists on a single explanation for where mutants come from, or why super-powered beings exist, or whether or not aliens have visited the Earth, or which cosmic forces rule the universe. I want to make it simpler for you to run your campaign, not more complicated. Nor do I want to steal focus from your own ideas.

NEW FEATS AND POWERS

We don't have any of these, either. Like the first volume, the whole purpose of More Bad Guys is to give you a set of villains you can drop into your own campaign as needed, with as little fuss and extra hassle as possible. I want you to be able to pick this book up, pull out a villain and use them, without having to learn a lot of new rules or the history of yet another fake comic book continuity.

This runs against my own creative grain. In fact I really enjoy fiddling around with the M&M system for my own amusement, making it do this and that, inventing new feats for the fun of it. However, it seems to me that if I pack the book with new rules it's going to complicate your game instead of making it simpler, and that runs contrary to the spirit of the project. Worse, what if I were to invent some really good, really useful new feats and powers—stuff everybody in the M&M Superlink community would want to use? Then you'd be forced to buy my book just to get your hands on the info, spending your hard-earned gaming dollar on my stuff whether you enjoy it or not.

There is one new Drawback in this book, but it's tailored to a specific character—the monstrous “Aleph.” If we ever use it again in any other publications

we'll include a full description of it there, too, so no one would be forced to get a copy of this book in order to use it.

Just for the sake of organization, here's the new Weakness and a description of how it works.

New Drawback: Non-Material

(The character can only exist in physical reality for about ten minutes at a time, and then only in the presence of one of their Sidekicks or at least two of their Minions).

You could adapt this Drawback to other villains, but I don't think a lot of Player Characters would want to use it.

WHY YOU SHOULD GO BUY THE FIRST BOOK

Because it's cool, and you'd like it. There is no other reason (but then again, is there ever?) You do not need a copy of The Bad Guys to use More Bad Guys. There are one or two places in the adventure scenarios where I suggest that a villain from the first book would fit into the plot, but that's just for the fun of it—you never actually need to. This book uses no new feats, powers or background material from the first book.

Still, you should go out and buy the first book anyway. It's fun! In fact, now that I stop to think of it, go buy lots of copies of all my books, right now!

CHAPTER 1: MINOR THREATS

DOCTOR DREAD



"Why blow up the world? I dunno, somebody has to, I guess"

Real Name: Marion "Pete" Stemplemeyer
PL: 7

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 6 **Attack Bonus:** 5 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 7 (4 if caught Flatfooted, 1 if caught Flatfooted without his leather coat)

Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 7

Skills: Bluff 9 (+12), Craft (Chemical) 10 (+13), Craft (Electronic) 10 (+13), Craft (Mechanical) 7 (+10), Craft (Structural) 9 (+12), Diplomacy 10 (+13), Disable Device 9 (+12), Knowledge (Technology) 8 (+11), Notice 6 (+7), Search 7 (+8), Stealth 7 (+9)

Feats: Connected, Defensive Roll 3, Distract (linked to Bluff), Elusive Target, Equipment 15 (75 pts worth), Evasion, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative, Inspire, Leadership, Minions (the "League of Dread"—five PL1 maladjusted juvenile delinquents with an insufficient supply of Ritalin), Skill Mastery (Computers, Craft [Chemical], Craft [Electronic], Craft [Mechanical]) Second Chance 3 (With Craft: Chemical, Craft: Mechanical and Disable Device)

Equipment: Cutting Torch (Blast 1 [Flaw: No Range], Drain Toughness 1), Flash Goggles (+5 Protection against Dazzle attacks), Heavy Leather Trenchcoat (3pts of Protection), Laptop Computer, (allows him to communicate with the Internet and activate his booby-traps via remote control), Lock-Release Gun, Night Vision Goggles (Super-Senses: Darkvision), Smoke Bombs (Obscure 4, Visual, 20 Foot Radius), 35 pts worth of booby-traps, Headquarters (see below), Tools (for Craft Skills)

Headquarters: Dr. Dread has the keys to a number of long-forgotten substations and equipment lockers in the subway system under the PCs' city. This network of hiding places qualifies as a Large Headquarters with Toughness 8 walls and the Following Features: a Communications System [he taps into the local phone system and wireless networks, with his laptop] a Computer [the aforementioned laptop, backed up by a heavily modded videogame system with a lot of illegal software on its hard-drive], Concealment, a Library worth of

information on the city's underground tunnels, utility systems and so forth [stored in the modded videogame system], Living Space for the Doctor and up to six of his minions [in the form of some cots and a lot of cached food hidden in the substations where he lurks] a separate Power Supply [pulled from the Transit System's emergency backup power network] and a hidden Workshop in one of the old disused stations)

Background: They call him Doctor Dread, or at least he wishes they would. A 26 year-old computer engineer from a rural state near the Player Characters' home city, he always vaguely wanted to smash the world and burn it all down. Not for any particular reason—it just seemed like it would look cool.

After he lost his job and moved back home to his parents' farmhouse he had more time to dwell on his obsessions, get bored and get into trouble. He had the technical know-how to cause a lot of havoc, so he made himself a costume, used an internet discussion board to recruit a few teenage henchmen (his so-called League of Dread) and set about destroying the world, one tiny little bit at a time.

They liked to blow up power substations, hurling bales of barbed-wire into the machinery, making them short out and explode. Telephone interchanges were another favorite target, although they don't explode as well.

The League of Dread never actually killed anybody, but they did manage to get the county authorities worked into a paranoid frenzy. Terrorism had come to rural America at last! It never seemed to occur to them that Doctor Dread might not be an Arab, or that the League of Dread might be local farm-boys.

It was a glorious summer, at least until the FBI got involved. The Bureau noticed that Doctor Dread was constantly posting boastful rants about his antics on the internet, and that he did not appear to be an Islamic fundamentalist.

By now the "League of Dread" case was extremely high-profile, making headlines across the country. "*Terrorism in*

the Heartland!" the papers screamed.

The FBI managed to catch most of the League of Dread in a single one-night sweep, but Doctor Dread himself vanished, and so did at least four of his henchmen. Where did they go? Why, to the Player Characters' home city, of course!

Wanted now from coast to coast, Doctor Dread stalks the service and utility tunnels beneath the city streets. He's constantly war-driving on his laptop, illegally logging onto wireless networks and posting more boastful screeds. He has somehow gotten keys to most of the substations off the underground public transit system, and has stockpiled supplies and equipment down there. He's getting really depressed, and if the Player Characters don't find him and stop him, he's going to try to build some kind of cyanide gas bomb and set it off in the subway system, killing or injuring dozens of people (not "tens of thousands" like he claims). He hopes to die in the conflagration himself.

Using Doctor Dread in Your Campaign:

Not tough enough to stand up to superheroes, Dr. Dread will fight the PCs from the shadows, striking at their city, causing havoc without actually coming to blows with them until they track him down. He's an elusive opponent, forever setting booby traps and leaving taunting messages for his pursuers.

He can be pretty scary if you use him right and keep him off stage for most of the scenario. Then when the PCs finally catch up with him they can find out just how pathetic he really is.

He can be a one-shot villain who causes some chaos and gets killed or locked away forever, but as the adventure scenarios below demonstrate, that doesn't actually have to be the end of his story. For the idea of Doctor Dread is stronger and more dangerous than the character himself. Read on and you'll see what I mean.

Adventures With Doctor Dread 1) League of Dread

There has been a series of thefts at a big downtown state university. Someone has been breaking into food service and the

chemistry labs from the steam tunnels that run underneath the campus.

A bored young undergraduate named Randi Stark who works for security part time has noticed an ominous trend in the stolen materials. It looks as though whoever is taking them may be trying to build a bomb. In light of the fact that Dr. Dread claims to be somewhere beneath these streets right now, and is constantly boasting in his internet posts that he has some incredible master plan ready to bring the city to its knees, this may be a job for superheroes. If one of the PCs is a college student in their secret identity, then they know Randi and she confides her suspicions in them. Otherwise she finds some way to reach them through a contact in the city's club scene.

Randi herself is a rebellious, sullen young woman who wears black and has a lot of piercings. She's not popular with campus security, and thinks it's ironic that she was assigned to this particular work-study job (but then again, there are a lot of things that strike her as ironic). No one in security will take her suppositions seriously, and neither will the city police. In fact the campus authorities are on the brink of transferring her to Food Service when the PCs hear about this matter.

Whether or not the PCs can convince anyone in law enforcement to help them stake out the tunnels depends on their reputation.

Randi knows vaguely how to get into the tunnels, and if the PCs go down there themselves, they find some boys from the Delta Tau Delta frat partying under the Student Center. If they talk to them instead of arresting them, they find that the frat guys are perfectly willing to help just for the sheer love of adventure. They use the tunnels to pull stupid pranks and to impress sorority girls, and they know the layout perfectly. They are, however, too noisy and distractible to successfully ambush the League of Dread. If the PCs try to enlist their help on a stakeout the frat brothers will want to bring dates with them, will show up drunk and will make snarky comments about Randi's hair, clothes and body jewelry. Better to use them as guides,

rather than muscle.

If the Player Characters think to try and trace Dr. Dread by his posts on the wireless networks, there is a resource close at hand. A computer nerd named Herbie Hemmet is desperately in love with Randi and would gladly do anything she asks if she so much as smiles at him. She will grudgingly be willing to give him some attention if the PCs ask her to, although managing a smile will be difficult for her.

Herbie is diffident, awkward and hard to work with. Once the PCs get to know him they'll find that he's eager to jerk people around once he finds himself in any kind of position of power over them. His own skills aren't up to tracking Dr. Dread's movements, but he can introduce the PCs to a much bigger and fatter computer guy named Cranston Bork, who's a bona-fide genius.

Bork is as loud as Hemmet is quiet. He wears a shiner's fez at all times and has all kinds of other odd and annoying affectations. But underneath his overbearing demeanor he's sensitive and eager to please and he'll gladly take on this project if he thinks it might keep people from getting hurt. Bork is so good his professors come to him for advice—in fact he's about to get poached straight out of the undergraduate program by a major software firm, so the PCs will have to make use of his prodigious talents quickly. Bork knows all about the Dr. Dread case (he plays M&M with a conspiracy nut who won't shut up about the League of Dread) and he knows just where to start looking.

What Bork finds is alarming. Dr. Dread has been posting from all over the downtown area, wherever the city's tunnel-systems lead. Three of the posts came from directly underneath this campus.

If the PCs want to speak with Bork's conspiracy-minded friend, he's a scrawny, hyperactive, goatee-wearing science fiction guy named Orville Janes. Tedious to be around, Janes constantly chatters about how great Rush Limbaugh is and how liberals control the media. He knows a whole lot about Dr. Dread and the League of Dread, although he's convinced that Dr. Dread is part of an Arabic terror network

and that there has been some kind of conspiracy to suppress these facts. His reasons for thinking this are clearly irrational (he likes to cite the fact that no evidence has been found as proof that it must have been covered up) but it's possible that the PCs might get taken in by it. Poor Janes disappears not long after he tells the PCs about the League of Dread, but no sinister cabal has done away with him. He's been hanging around the Science Fiction Club instead of going to class and has finally gotten himself kicked out of school for it.

To keep the PCs' paranoia at the right pitch, just before they go down into the tunnels something unsettling happens to Randi. She picks up a ringing payphone, looks startled, says *"what?"* and hangs up. She seems rattled and tells the PCs. *"It was some kind of voice—all messed up and electronic. It said 'stay away from this.' Then they hung up. &@#%* cowards!"*

This incident may give the PCs the idea that Dr. Dread has secret supporters on campus, but he doesn't. He was watching Randi through binoculars from under a steam grate and called the payphone from his laptop's wireless connection.

Once the PCs stake out the steam tunnels, they won't have long to wait. At four in the morning two members of the League of Dread will try to break into the Student Center from below, and make off with some more food.

Even though these are just disturbed teenagers, armed with homemade smoke-bombs and mace, the GM should try to make the pursuit through the steam tunnels as eerie and atmospheric as possible, with lots of furtive, half-glimpsed shapes and scuttling noises in the dark.

Even low-powered superheroes can catch at least one member of the League of Dread without much difficulty. The kid whom the PCs captured wears camouflage pants, a jeans jacket with a pentagram on the back and a t-shirt that says "Free Charles Manson." He's speaks with a rural accent and his hairstyle is about five years out of date. You might think a kid like that would be totally defiant, but instead he's terrified and deeply depressed. He spends most of the day sleeping and cries a lot

when he's awake. When questioned, he'll break.

His name is Ross Krammitt, he's sixteen years old and he's so unhappy that he may try to kill himself at any moment. He's been with the League of Dread for about a year, and he's never seen Dr. Dread get this upset. The walls are closing in on him now, and he's talking about taking the city down with him. He's building some kind of cyanide bomb and he's nearly finished it.

Ross knows where one of Dr. Dread's secret lairs can be found and he suspects that there are others. He hasn't seen the bomb and doesn't know where it is. While he knows that some of the tunnels have been booby-trapped, he's not sure where all the traps are.

After the PCs capture Ross Krammitt, ominous rumors begin to circulate. They say the feds and the city authorities are going to use this incident as an excuse to crack down hard on anti-war groups on campus. Talk radio hosts and bloggers are already claiming that this proves the American student left is linked to Islamic terrorism abroad. The FBI seems to have the same idea. Everyone thinks that the League of Dread must have some kind of support from students on campus and no one seems to grasp that the League of Dread is a strictly local, homegrown American phenomenon with no connection to Islam at all—or indeed any political point of view whatsoever. The police are trying hard not to let the press know that the only suspect in their custody is a teenage farm-boy. Then they leak the (untrue) rumor that he's a campus antiwar activist and the city's mood turns ugly.

Clearly the PCs are going to have to find Dr. Dread soon, and reveal to the world what a sad, shabby, pointless excuse for an arch-villain he really is. Really drastic stuff may happen if they don't—things like mass arrests and tanks on the streets. And then of course there's his cyanide bomb to consider. He's still days away from completing it, but it may take a while for them to catch him. He knows the tunnels well, and he has set booby traps all over the place. Once the PCs clobber him, dismantle his incomplete bomb and turn him over to

the authorities, the case gets a flurry of media attention.

Dr. Dread angrily denies having anything to do with either international terrorism or the antiwar movement. When asked at his arraignment why he did it, he says *"I don't know. You got to do something."*

This severely undercuts the forces who were pushing for a police crackdown and the city breathes a sigh of relief.

2) Hand of Dread

After he's been imprisoned for a while, Doctor Dread sends a letter to the Player Character who put him away. He writes that one innocent person per day will die until the PC agrees to come meet him, alone. He encloses the obituary of Miss Bonnie Burzlander, a nurse who died in a swift but horrible accident with a medical incinerator. The next day, they receive an envelope containing the obituary for Dick Ronald, a retired postal worker who accidentally locked himself in a backyard sauna and got steamed to death.

Each day that they don't come to see Doctor Dread, another obituary arrives in the mail. All of them died in accidents. Usually weird and nasty accidents (but not always, which is a clue the PCs may well overlook).

The prison authorities are no use. They swear that these letters can't be coming from inside the jail, and they're right—in fact Dr. Dread has been bribing a guard to send them from outside the prison walls. The warden has no desire to have anyone investigate the widespread corruption in his prison (which goes all the way up to his office and beyond), so any inquiries the PCs make on that front initially go nowhere.

If and when the PC agrees to visit Doctor Dread, the Doctor gets straight to business. He looks thin and twitchy, there are a lot of fresh bruises on his face and a big scar which the PC hasn't seen before. Dr Dread explains that he does not like prison and has decided that it's time to leave. If the PC breaks him out, no one else has to die. Killing or brutalizing him here in the visiting room will only make things

worse, he adds. The killings will continue until he makes them stop.

This is all a colossal, desperate bluff. His League of Dread is extinct. He no longer has any agents on the outside. He's just been tearing obituaries out of the newspaper and having them mailed to the PCs. All those people really did die in accidents—he just picked the weirdest and most suspicious looking ones he could find.

If the PC acts skeptical, Dr Dread suddenly gets agitated and yells that if they break him out, he'll help them track down the "Dirty Bomb" that his associates are planting somewhere in the city right now. This should be all it takes to convince the PCs that he's just messing with them.

However, in the course of trying to figure out how he's been smuggling those messages out of prison, the PCs have a chance to break up a network of crooked prison guards. Weirdly, this is just what Dr. Dread wants them to do. He can see that the network is evil, and that it makes all the inmates' lives worse. He's reasonably certain that the PCs aren't corrupt and he feels that if he can manipulate the Player Characters into bringing the network down, life will get better for everybody. But he can't just report it to them directly—the guards would surely kill him for that. He has to do it by indirection, by getting the PCs involved in a way where it looks like it wasn't to his advantage for them to find out.

If the PCs come back and talk to him again after all the dust settles, he won't directly tell them that this is what has happened, but he'll imply it, and smile.

3) Legacy of Dread

Doctor Dread dies in a prison brawl, possibly as a result of the events in Adventure #2. People say that in his final days he had blossomed from a wayward, bored young troublemaker into a jailhouse activist, genuinely concerned with improving the lives of his fellow inmates. It's as though he found a purpose in jail, a thing to occupy his large and restless mind.

Not long after he dies, the local news starts receiving threatening videotapes. Doctor Dread appears in the tapes and claims to have faked his own

death, and to be out for revenge. Soon everyone who trifled with him will know the touch of Dread.

The authorities are getting panicky again, just as in scenario #1. There is talk of an underground network of young people who support him, of an invisible Army of Dread. There are whispers of Imminent crackdowns and mass arrests. They're talking in the city council about imposing a curfew on anyone under the age of 26.

On the third video, Dr. Dread claims to have rigged a power substation with a nerve-gas bomb. A deadly challenge of wits awaits anyone who tries to defuse it. And think fast—the bomb goes off in exactly 666 minutes.

Instead of playing this tape, the news station brings it directly to the Player Characters. They're the ones who beat Dr. Dread before. Do they think they could do it again? If the bomb goes off, hundreds, perhaps thousands of people are going to die. And there's not enough time to evacuate them all.

Unbeknownst to the local news team, this is all a trap, designed to lure in the PCs who sent Dr. Dread to jail. There is indeed a bomb in the substation, a much bigger and cruder one than Dr. Dread usually built, and it will explode if anyone tries to open the door. There's no nerve gas.

Give the PCs every reason to be suspicious and to approach the substation with caution. If they can come up with a reasonable way to find and defuse the bomb before they open the door, let them. If they succeed in getting the bomb out intact, they can see that it was built by somebody who didn't have nearly as much skill as Dr. Dread.

If they defused the bomb, then as they leave the substation, someone takes a shot at them with a .22 caliber hunting rifle from a concealed location nearby. She will probably get away (she's shooting from inside her car), but the incident should give the PCs another clue as to what is really going on. The Doctor never uses a gun.

In fact, he really is dead. The culprit is his grief-stricken mother. He left a series of videos that he wanted played in

the event of his death, to help perpetuate his legend, to cause more mischief and make people run around aimlessly looking for him.

Ironically, by the time of his death Dr. Dread had outgrown his supervillain phase and probably wouldn't have wanted his mom to send out the tapes, let alone try and use them to lure superheroes to their doom. While she's never done anything like this before, she's an enthusiastic amateur and has found some of her son's old books on making bombs and booby traps. It makes her feel close to him, to the part of him that she could never reach while he was alive. And she is beginning to see why he found this so much fun.

The PCs can locate Mrs. Stemplemeyer at her farmhouse upstate. She'll make a half-hearted attempt to kill herself if she sees superheroes breaking down her door, but at this stage she actually wants to be captured and to tell her story to the world. How she, a simple farmwife and home-maker, with nothing but pluck and gumption, briefly held a city in fear.

One the PCs capture her, she becomes an inspiration to other middle-aged housewives. What she did was wrong, of course, everyone agrees, but it was still a remarkable achievement. Just look what someone can accomplish if she sets her mind to it—and at her stage of life! Oprah interviews her in prison, and she's writing a book.

This may or may not be a happy ending, in the PCs' estimation, but it is the thing that finally destroys Doctor Dread. For the idea of Doctor Dread was bigger than the man himself, and could have caused considerably more harm. It kept going even after he outgrew it and it would have kept going after his death. But now it's been turned into something else entirely.

CITIZEN VI



"Good to be dead. Frees the mind of distractions."

Real Name: Dr. Viktor Chernov, PhD.
PL: 9

Str: - **Dex:** - **Con:** - **Int:** 38 (+14) **Wis:** 28 (+10) **Cha:** 8 (-1)

Initiative: n/a **Attack Bonus** n/a

Defense: n/a **Toughness Save:** 9 (-5 if taken out of his cryogenic chamber)

Fortitude Save: +n/a

Reflexes Save: +n/a **Willpower Save:** 9

Skills: Computers 12 (+26), Craft (Chemical) 14 (+28), Craft (Electronic) 14 (+28), Craft (Mechanical) 14 (+28), Craft (Structural) 14 (+28) Disable Device 14 (+28), Investigate 10 (+24), Knowledge (Behavioral Sciences) 8 (+22), Knowledge (Earth Sciences), 8 (+22), Knowledge (History) 5 (+19), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 14 (+28), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 14 (+28), Knowledge (Technology) 14 (+28), Languages (Russian, English, German, French, Hindi, Japanese, Tungus, Latin, Greek, Italian, Chinese), Medicine 14 (+28), Profession (Scientist) 14 (+28)

Feats: Diehard, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Jack-of-All-Trades, Master Plan, Second Chance 13

(Computers, Craft [Chemical], Craft [Electronic], Craft [Mechanical], Craft [Structural], Disable Device, Investigate, Knowledge [Behavioral Sciences], Knowledge [Earth Sciences], Knowledge [History], Knowledge [Life Sciences], Knowledge [Physical Sciences], Knowledge [Technology], Skill Mastery 3 (Craft [Chemical], Craft [Electronic], Craft [Mechanical], Craft [Structural], Disable Device, Investigate, Knowledge [Behavioral Sciences], Knowledge [Earth Sciences], Knowledge [History], Knowledge [Life Sciences], Knowledge [Physical Sciences], Knowledge [Technology]) Well-Informed

Powers: Immunity (to Aging, Cold, Disease, Exhaustion, Intimidation, Poison, Starvation, Suffocation)

Equipment: Giant Cryogenic Chamber (Preserves his "life", provides Toughness 9)

Complications: Doesn't care about anything. Will reveal his secrets to anyone who asks him.

Drawbacks: Disabled (Dead, can't move, attack or defend himself in any way)

Background: Citizen Six was the mastermind behind all of the Soviet Union's most fiendish super-science. No one on this side of the former Iron Curtain is quite sure whether or not he ever existed.

During the 1960s, it became clear that Soviet parahuman science was growing by unprecedented leaps. The Russians were said to have built at least six giant underground laboratories beneath the frigid arctic steppes, where they carried out some of the most dangerous experiments ever conducted. These "Soviet Science Cities" turned out parahuman soldiers, battlesuits and insane wonder-weapons all through the '60s and early '70s. The NATO countries launched a number of desperate secret missions to attack the Science Cities and destroy (or steal) one or another of their secret weapons. Invisible wars were fought over the fruits of Soviet Super-Science. The Americans built vast underground bunkers of their own in Alaska and the western deserts to duplicate their successes.

Some of the Soviets' experiments were carried out with the help of captured Nazi scientists, but the Third Reich's best

work was crude by comparison with the things the Russians were producing by 1965.

One of the greatest American intelligence experts, J Danforth White, firmly believed in the six science cities. He further maintained that the giant leap forward in Russian experimental weapons technology was ultimately the work of one man. He called this theoretical super-genius "Citizen Six" (as the sixth most powerful man in the Eastern Bloc).

White staked his whole career and reputation on the existence of Citizen Six. Soon he came to see the invisible hand of Citizen Six everywhere, from Vietnam to Berkeley. His quest to neutralize this threat destroyed his reputation, ruined his health and eventually got him retired to a secret mental home for disturbed agents in the Rocky Mountains. It also led him, in desperation, to carry out violent and illegal operations on American soil and to embroil himself in the Southeast Asian heroin trade. But before he descended into madness and disgrace, Mr. White actually managed to get Citizen Six killed by his own side. For although the American intelligence community no longer believes it, Citizen Six was very real. His name was Doctor Viktor Chernov and he was one of the greatest physicists ever to walk the earth.

Doctor Chernov was not like Andre Sakharov, troubled by feelings of conscience or a sense of duty toward humanity. His mind was as vast, cold and distant as the planet Neptune. His concerns were purely theoretical. He felt no more common feeling with humanity than he did with the bacteria under his fingernails. Then again, neither did Mr. White.

Chernov was an early success of a Stalin-era program, run by captive Nazi scientists, to create children with superhuman intelligence. His childhood was a strange mixture of painful surgery, brutal neglect and pampered luxury. He formed no human bonds with anyone and never seemed to require them. By the time he was five years old, he was performing calculus. By the time he was ten, he dwelt in mathematical realms that no one had yet named. For the rest of his short life Dr.

Chernov moved between ever-more secret research facilities. He was never anything like the sixth most powerful man in the country, never the architect of any grand strategy for the Eastern Bloc—he just built weapons and dreamed his unimaginable dreams. It was unfortunate for him that he never had much political influence, for when J. Danforth White managed to make it look as though Dr. Chernov was preparing to defect, there was no one to save him from being marched out into the woods and shot.

But a funny thing happened after his death. Many of his terror weapons ceased functioning. Opinion is still divided as to what went wrong. Either he was the only one capable of caring for and maintaining his devices, because he was the only one who understood how they worked, or else he had some kind of paranormal ability to warp reality and his machines were animated largely by the power of his mind. Whatever the case may be, much of his life's work became useless junk within a few years of his death, and by the 1980s Soviet military and paranormal science lagged well behind the United States.

Certain parties in the Red Army's Theoretical Weapons Division felt Dr. Chernov was too valuable to be allowed to moulder in the ground, so they froze his body for safekeeping. The location of his crypt remained a closely guarded secret until after the Cold War, but by then it had vanished.

More than one supervillain or Sinister Organization has dug up Citizen Six, plugged electrodes into his brain and had him design weapons for them. The years have taken a serious toll on his faculties but he's still amazingly adept for someone who has been dead for more than thirty years.

Dr. Chenov is unsettling company. He is dead, immobile and confined to a block of ice. His voice comes weakly out of a speaker on the side of his tank. His face can be seen dimly through the ice but his lips never move when he speaks. Calling his personality distracted and distant is a serious understatement. He's almost comically amoral and totally unconcerned with his own survival (he's dead after all) or

anyone else's. If the PCs ask him, he'll happily design weapons for them, too.

If a Player Character somehow goes back in time and meets Citizen VI while he's still walking around, they'll find that his personality is exactly the same. The only difference is that his lips move when he talks.

Using Citizen VI in Your Campaign:

Soviet Science Cities? The secret history of the Cold War? Isn't this exactly the kind of campaign-altering back-story stuff we promised not to saddle you with? You're right, it is. So to make the character more flexible we're going to add some extra options. For example, just exactly how central was Citizen Six to Soviet military research? Was he the sole genius behind all their successes, or was he one of many parahumans and mad scientists working on their behalf? Did he actually oversee the construction of huge underground labs in Siberia, or did he just work there? Or were the "Soviet Science Cities" just a product of J. Danforth White's overheated imagination? How much of his genius was authentic and how much was just his superhuman ability to create weird machines? How much of what Mr. White imagined about him was true? We've left the answers to these questions purposefully incomplete. If you don't already have a spot in your campaign for the Soviet Union's leading Silver Age super-scientist, give it to Viktor Chernov. If you already have a supervillain ready to occupy that spot, then Citizen Six was a showy fraud who believed in his own nonexistent genius and made amusing machines that fell apart when his mind no longer powered them.

We're also going to leave it open as to how much the world knows about him. He could be an obscure reference for spy buffs and conspiracy theorists. Or, it could be that Mr. White managed to cause a real panic over this elusive Red menace and everyone familiar with the Silver Age remembers the nonexistent Soviet mastermind, but no one believes in him. Or Mr. White's own existence could be totally secret and the embarrassing story of Citizen VI is only known in Intelligence circles,

where Russian spies still taunt their American counterparts about it.

In Silver Age campaigns, Citizen VI is an elusive Russian master villain who rarely appears in person. PCs will find themselves shaking their fists at his smiling visage on a giant monitor screen far more often than they will sock him in his goateed jaw. In modern-day adventures he is almost always a secondary character, a resource that other villains call on to produce weapons and other devices. The GM can also use him as a source for any weird old secrets about the Cold War that need to be introduced into your game. While he can't dream up new devices, he does remember how to reconstruct his old ones—and there were a lot of them.

CITIZEN VI IN HIS PRIME

For games set during the Silver Age, here's what Citizen VI looked like when he was somewhat less dead and still working for the Soviets.



PL:11

Str: 12 (+1) Dex: 12 (+1) Con: 8 (-1) Int: 40 (+20) Wis: 34 (+11) Cha: 8 (-1)
Initiative: 1 Attack Bonus 6

Defense: 6

Toughness Save: (-1 without armor)

Fortitude Save: -1 **Reflexes Save:** 1

Willpower Save: 11

Computers 12 (+32), Craft (Chemical) 14 (+34), Craft (Electronic) 16 (+36), Craft (Mechanical) 14 (+34), Craft (Structural) 16 (+36) Disable Device 14 (+34), Investigate 10 (+30), Knowledge (Behavioral Sciences) 8 (+28), Knowledge (Earth Sciences), 8 (+28), Knowledge (History) 5 (+25), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 14 (+34), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 16 (+36), Knowledge (Technology) 16 (+36), Languages (Russian, English, German, French, Hindi, Japanese, Tungus, Latin, Greek, Italian, Chinese), Medicine 14 (+34), Profession (Scientist) 14 (+34)

Feats: Benefit (head of a secret research installation, effectively above the law), Connected, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Jack-of-All-Trades, Master Plan, Second Chance 13 (Computers, Craft [Chemical], Craft [Electronic], Craft [Mechanical], Craft [Structural], Disable Device, Investigate, Knowledge [Behavioral Sciences], Knowledge [Earth Sciences], Knowledge [History], Knowledge [Life Sciences], Knowledge [Physical Sciences], Knowledge [Technology], Skill Mastery 3 (Craft [Chemical], Craft [Electronic], Craft [Mechanical], Craft [Structural], Disable Device, Investigate, Knowledge [Behavioral Sciences], Knowledge [Earth Sciences], Knowledge [History], Knowledge [Life Sciences], Knowledge [Physical Sciences], Knowledge [Technology]), Well-Informed

Powers: Device (Powered Armor: Blast 10, Flight 5 [Maximum Speed: 250 miles per hour], Immunity [to Cold, Disease, Exhaustion, Heat, Poison, Pressure, Radiation, Suffocation] Impervious Protection 10, Super-Senses [Darkvision, Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Infravision, Microscopic Vision, Radio Transmission and Hearing with a 10 mile Range, Time Sense, Ultra-Hearing, Ultravision])

Equipment: Headquarters (See Below), normally has 75 points or so invested in some giant weapon or "plot device."

Headquarters: Underground Soviet Science City

Size: Astounding

Toughness 15

Features: Communications, Computer, Garage, Hangar, Holding Cells for up to 11 superpowered prisoners, Infirmary, Isolated, Laboratory, Living Space, Library, Power System, Security System, Workshop

Complication: Devoid of human feeling (doesn't understand humor, makes all rolls related to social interaction at a -6)

Adventures With Citizen VI: 1) Gotterdammerung

From all across America, the old men are gathering. They rub their scars, adjust their eyepatches and prosthetic limbs, clean their ancient firearms, squeeze themselves into clothes they haven't worn in years and set out on the road. From academia, from consulting firms, from comfortable retirement in the Virginia suburbs, from crummy bars and homeless shelters and house arrest the spies shuffle out of the shadows for one last mission. Mr. White is calling. Every former agent who still believes in Citizen Six has heard the news. America's great enemy, Dr. Viktor Chernov, is still alive (well, not alive exactly, but still our enemy) and Mr. White has finally found him. It took J. Danforth White years to establish lines of communication outside his mountain prison. Years more to find ways of reaching his old allies. He despaired of ever finding the enemy now, of proving that he existed. But then a funny thing happened. A ferocious young man in a costume broke into the mental institution and offered to help him. He called himself "God's Lightning" (see this supervillain's description on Page 127 to find out why this is such bad news). God's Lightning had learned that there was a secret prison in the Rockies which held just one man, and he had come to see what sort of man that was.

Mr. White had known many eager young crusaders like God's Lightning in the war against Communism and he knew just how to explain everything to him. Once he heard the story, God's Lightning offered to help him track down Citizen Six for free. And he did. With Mr. White's guidance, he found the location of a secret vault in the frigid wasteland of Yakutsk, which in all likelihood

held Dr. Chernov's cryonic chamber. He wanted to know how to get that deep inside of Russia, and Mr. White told him. But he made sure to advise him badly, for he had already begun to suspect that God's Lightning was an infiltrator, here at the behest of the KGB. The man's false Australian accent had given him away (in fact it's a real Australian accent, a little softened from years of living away from Australia—but let's not tell Mr. White until the fun starts). Then Mr. White called up every last ally he had. A surprising number of them were tired enough of life to answer his call. He has perhaps as many as thirty agents in the field, all of them seasoned (if somewhat elderly) killers, all of them eager to go out in one last blaze of glory. They're on their way to the former Soviet Union right now, hoping to beat God's Lightning and his team "Wargtimmen" (see Page 120) to the vault. But more than one of them has old and terrible enemies in Russia—real ones, as opposed to the kind that Mr. White sees everywhere, and it isn't very long before the KGB and its allies in the Russian mob are on to them. One leading light of the Russian Mafia, a former KGB enforcer named Gunnar Mossberg (born in Finland, he's of Swedish descent) actually figures out what Mr. White's agents are looking for and dispatches a horde of his own killers to intercept them.

The PCs get involved when a gunfight erupts on the deck of a freighter that's headed to Petropavlosk. The combatants are all men in their sixties and seventies, but they're all extremely skilled. Mr. White suspects some members of his team of disloyalty, so he's having them eliminate one another before the trip to Russia gets underway.

The PCs get called in to help stop the disturbance, which lasts nearly an hour (these old codgers are extremely cagey gunfighters). One mortally wounded survivor, a gentleman with an eyepatch, a Stetson hat and a West Texas accent, confesses the whole story to the PCs as he dies. He's carrying documents that seem to show the location of the vault, and has some really good false papers to get into Russia with.

It's a five-way race to Yakutsk,

between the Player Characters, Mr. White's geriatric assassins, Gunnar Mossberg's evil crew, any aging KGB killers with old scores to settle against members of Mr. White's team and the supervillain group known as Wargtimmen.

For his part, God's Lightning is perfectly sincere about his quest. He believes all the same crazy conspiracy theories as Mr. White, plus a whole lot of anti-Semitic ones. He really does think that Citizen Six is a threat to Western Civilization and firmly intends to destroy him, at least at first. Then, as he gets deeper into the tundra, it occurs to him that he might be able to do some useful things with a weapons designer like Viktor Chernov and resolves to capture him instead.

Let us hope someone else gets there first, for if Wargtimmen managed to activate any of Citizen Six's old doomsday weapons, they would suddenly go from being a third-rate supervillain team to a menace of the first order. As a possible surprise ending, what if the vault is empty, and someone else already has their hands on Citizen VI?

An Old Killer

PL: 6

Str: 12 (+1) Dex: 16 (+3) Con: 14 (+2) Int: 14 (+2) Wis: 16 (+3) Cha: 14 (+2) Initiative: 3 Attack Bonus: 6 Defense: 6 Toughness Save: 4 (+2 without body armor) Fortitude Save: 4 Reflexes Save: 6 Willpower Save: 6
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Skills: Bluff 8 (+10), Diplomacy 5 (+7), Drive 8 (+11), Gather Information 9 (+11), Intimidate 4 (+6), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+6), Notice 6 (+9), Profession (Spy) 4 (+6), Sense Motive 6 (+9), Stealth 5 (+8), Survival 6 (+9)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Accurate Attack, Assessment, Connected, Improved Aim, Improved Critical (With Pistol), Sneak Attack 2, Track

Equipment: Body Armor (4 Toughness), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire]), 3pts random spy gear (may or may not still be in working order)

Spetsnaz Commando

PL: 6

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 4 (+1 without body armor)
Fortitude Save: 4 **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Intimidate 4 (+5), Medicine 2 (+2), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 6 (+8), Profession (Soldier) 4 (+4), Stealth 5 (+8), Survival 8 (+10)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment), Evasion, Improved Trip, Interpose, Sneak Attack 2, Teamwork, Track

Equipment: Night-Vision Goggles (Super-Senses: Low-Light Vision), Body Armor (4 Toughness), Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire]), Huge Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage)

2) The Laughing Plague

A wave of deadly mirth threatens to engulf America! All across the country, people are collapsing in agonized hilarity, laughing and laughing endlessly, unable to stop. The Center for Disease Control is baffled. The country's best medical experts have no clue as to what could be causing this. The victims show no signs of brain damage, no one seems to be able to isolate any pathogens in their blood. And despite their best efforts, the medical researchers themselves are rapidly being contaminated by the plague.

No one has yet died from the Laughing Plague, except for a few people who were overcome while driving cars and crashed into things. But if it keeps spreading at this rate, it's only a matter of time before disaster overwhelms the US, as airline pilots, medical workers and other critical personnel start succumbing in large numbers on the job. There are elements in the Russian Army, old generals from the Brezhnev era, who know what this sounds like. Dr. Viktor Chernov was said to have built a weapon like this; something much too terrible ever to use. Fearful of the plague spreading to Russia, they authorize a daring, unbelievably high-risk covert

mission—a raid on American soil.

And this is how the PCs enter the story. Let the PCs know about the Laughing Plague and the way it has the experts baffled. There doesn't seem to be anything they can do about it themselves. Even PC gadgeteers and super-scientists will be unable to figure out what is causing it.

Then a Russian Spetsnaz (Special Forces) team attacks the secret lair of a venerable American superhero—call him the All-American, or use one of your own. A hard-line Cold Warrior who has largely retreated from public view, the All-American fought crime and America's enemies abroad with a crusading zeal that some people think was not entirely sane. His heyday was the early 1980s. A mechanical genius and an unbelievably skilled hand-to-hand combatant, he became something of a law unto himself, operating in America's interests, but independent of US foreign policy. He protested loudly that Glasnost was fake, that the Soviet Union would never abandon the Cold War. Then the Cold War and the Soviet Union both collapsed, and he got a little strange. For a while he claimed to be fighting some kind of secret United Nations conspiracy to take over the world and crush it beneath the heel of a resurgent Communism. Then after a lot of investigation he found out that there was no such conspiracy. At around this time he stopped making public appearances and started spending a lot of time in his secret lair, looking at his trophies and drinking himself to sleep. He was getting old in any case. The war on terror brought him out of his retirement for a while in 2002, but it was painfully clear that his physical capacities had declined too far for him to be effective on the battlefields of Afghanistan, so he left public life once more.

The All-American was an athlete and a gadgeteer. He hasn't designed any new equipment in years, but most of his old gadgets are still in working order. His body, on the other hand, has gone rather badly to seed. The Spetsnaz commandoes attack his secret headquarters in town. The All-American isn't at home—in fact he hasn't used this base in years. But the Spetsnaz find enough information in it to locate his

main compound upstate.

Let the PCs intervene and try to stop the attacking Russian commandoes. They will almost certainly beat them (these guys are tough, but they're just PL 5-7 Minions) If captured, one of them talks. Not because he fears imprisonment or interrogation, but because he can see that the mission has failed and the fate of the world may be at stake. If the PCs seem unlikely to trust a Russian commando, then perhaps the Spetsnaz team was accompanied by a Russian superhero whom the PCs already know is honorable and trustworthy, and he (or she) tells them all about their desperate assignment. The mission objective is nothing less than the mortal remains of Citizen VI. The Russians know that the All-American stole him, and that he keeps his frozen prisoner locked away in some kind of vault. When and how the All-American acquired Citizen VI is a matter for the GM to decide. He might have stolen him from the facility in Yakutsk years ago, or might have just recently snatched him from some famous supervillain (or perhaps even from Wargtimmen—see the first scenario). It all depends on the role you want Citizen VI to play in your campaign. The All-American has never met J. Danforth White, or even heard his name. That's almost a shame, since they would get along very well. Like Mr. White, the All-American thinks Dr. Chernov is the incarnation of absolute evil, the worst enemy the West has ever known, and he's afraid that if he ever lets go of him, or releases him from his living death, someone will find a way to bring him back from beyond the grave. Only by keeping him semi-alive and watching him carefully can the All-American feel safe. Sometimes the two of them talk, long into the night.

If a Russian commando team breaks down the All-American's door and tries to make off with Citizen VI, he will fight them with all the strength left in his body, and he won't believe them when they say that they need Dr. Chernov to save America, and possibly the world. And yet it is true.

The Laughing Plague is not a virus or a germ—it is a living, sentient Informational Entity, a concept, a being

made of pure information. It can spread from person to person, over television broadcasts (but only if they have enough resolution) or even through the pages of a book. Only Citizen Six can stop it, and stopping it won't be as simple as asking him how. He will need access to powerful computers, living test subjects infected with the Laughing Plague, a great deal of equipment and about a week's worth of time. Clever PCs may be able to point out to the All-American that he already has most of the equipment and could build the rest. If he's willing to work with Citizen VI, could he save the world one last time?

The All-American

PL: 9

Str: 12 (+1) Dex: 14 (+2) Con: 16 (+3) Int: 20 (+5) Wis: 18 (+4) Cha: 18 (+4) Initiative: 2 Attack Bonus (Melee): 9 Attack Bonus (Ranged): 10 Defense: 8 Toughness Save: 9 Impervious (3 without force-field) Fortitude Save: 6 Reflexes Save: 9 Willpower Save: 9

Skills: Craft (Chemical) 14 (+19), Craft (Electronic) 14 (+19), Craft (Mechanical) 14 (+19), Craft (Structural) 14 (+19), Computers 10 (+15), Diplomacy 6 (+10), Disable Device 14 (+19), Investigate 4 (+9), Knowledge (Earth Sciences) 10 (+15), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 10 (+15), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 14 (+19), Knowledge (Technology) 14 (+19), Medical 5 (+10), Pilot 8 (+10), Stealth 5 (+7)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Attack Focus (Ranged), Beginner's Luck, Improved Disarm, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Skill Mastery 2 (Craft [Chemical], Craft [Electronic], Craft [Mechanical], Craft [Structural], Disable Device, Knowledge [Earth Sciences], Knowledge [Life Sciences], Knowledge [Technology], Knowledge [Physical Sciences])

Equipment: Jet Pack (Hard to lose; Flight 5 [Maximum Speed: 250 miles per hour]), Force-Field Generator (Hard to Lose; 9 Impervious Toughness), Vibro-Ray (Easy to lose; Blast 9), Darkvision Goggles (Hard to lose; Super-Senses: Darkvision).

The Masked Weirdo

(aka the Masked Masked-Man,
aka the Phantom Specter)



"Freeze! Get down on the floor! At the same time! Now that would be something! Because to freeze, you'd have to hold still, and then you couldn't get down on the floor, but if you got down on the floor, then you couldn't—where was I? Oh yeah—don't make any trouble and everyone gets hurt! No, wait, I mean make any trouble but nobody gets hurt. Get made by trouble or everyone hurts? But everybody hurts anyway, don't they? And aren't we all the product of troubled backgrounds? I know I am..."

Real Name: Bob Ditchfield
PL: 8

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 8 **Defense:** 8

(3 if he is caught Flatfooted)

Toughness Save: 7 (2 if he is caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 8 **Reflexes Save:** 7 **Willpower Save:** 8

Skills: Bluff 13 (+17), Craft (Artistic) 6 (+9), Craft (Mechanical) 5 (+8), Drive 3 (+6), Escape Artist 4 (+7), Intimidate 4 (+8), Notice 5 (+9), Performance 13 (Oratory) (+17), Stealth 8 (+11)

Feats: Defensive Roll 5, Dodge Focus 5, Elusive Target, Evasion, Fascinate (linked to Performance), Inspire, Leadership, Master Plan, Sidekick 3 (The Ditchfield Kids: Pinky, Ralphie and Max—three unwashed PL 6 juvenile delinquents), Second Chance (Bluff and Performance)

Equipment: May have up to 8 points in random low-tech gadgets, all of them made from common household objects, Vehicle (the "Wierdmobile"—a 1978 Ford station wagon with fake wood paneling and a hideous green paint-job; Size: Large; Strength: 35; Speed: 5; Defense: 8; Toughness 9)

Complications: Completely bonkers (does crazy, irrational, foolhardy things)

Background: Strange, schizoid masked man of mystery—where the Masked Masked-Man walks, spatulas tremble! For spatulas are the handmaidens of bewilderment and desire!

He often makes no sense, as you can see from the above, and revels in paradoxes and silly word-play. He tends to speak in supervillain clichés and bizarre non-sequiters. The Masked Weirdo lives in a tumbledown one-story tract home out in the suburbs (if the PCs chase him out of town he'll start living in his station wagon). His overgrown yard is strewn with junk that he has blown up or welded together or strung from the trees. It's only a matter of time before the county health authorities manage to throw him out, if superheroes don't get to him first.

Sort of a very, very low-rent master villain, his only superhuman power is his craziness, his only henchmen are his three kids. Glue-sniffing, fire-setting juvenile delinquents who seldom bathe, they constantly squabble among themselves but they love their crazy dad fiercely. Although

they take advantage of his poor judgment and encourage his loony antics they would do anything to protect him or to avoid being separated from him.

Anyone who visits his neighborhood can find out the Masked Weirdo's origin story with a Gather Information roll vs. a mere DC 15. Bob Ditchfield was always an addled, inarticulate dreamer with vague ambitions of being an artist, prone to strange, Zen-like reveries. Moving to the suburbs and toiling at a lousy job broke his spirit. Then his wife left him and he went insane. For a long time Bob just sat around and cried and made strange art. He first donned the mask of the Masked Masked-Man when a Class D Licensed Animal Collector stole the family's pet cat, Lucky, out of their back yard.

Class D collectors are an odd bunch. Independent contractors, they work for no one but themselves, collecting strays and selling them as lab animals. Their conditions of their license are such that they don't have to reveal their sources or account for where any of their animals come from, so they seldom limit themselves to actual strays and quietly lift pets out of yards when they think no one is looking. Should they get caught, the crime is a misdemeanor and once they have paid their ticket they are free to continue collecting—it doesn't invalidate their license (this is all true, you know—one of these kindly gentlemen is likely prowling your neighborhood right now, while you're reading this).

Bob's youngest son Ralphie spotted the collector making off with the cat. Ralphie tried to stop him from stealing Lucky, but got nothing but a face full of pepper spray for his pains. When Ralphie's older sister Lulu saw her little brother get maced, she called the police. Unfortunately, the officer who arrived at the scene knew and disliked the Ditchfield kids, and arrested Ralphie instead of the animal collector.

The Ditchfields never saw Lucky again, and their subsequent efforts to have something done about the matter came to nothing (Bob's obvious craziness didn't help their case very much). Clearly the time had come for Justice to go masked.

And yet the vending machine we

call the universe continues to malfunction, dispensing not the tasty candy of righteousness no matter how the Masked Masked-Man pounds on its cruel glass visage. He now wages a strange one-man war against school administrators who hate kids, cops who habitually use excessive force on juveniles and of course Class D Licensed Animal Collectors, playing weird, threatening, incomprehensible pranks on his victims in an effort to bring about their surrender.

Bob's kids are only too happy to feed him an ever-growing list of targets, and he's recently started hunting more dangerous prey. Two local politicians who are trying to enact harsh anti-kid laws and a judge who takes children away from poor families and gives them to rich ones (for a suitable bribe) have lately felt his wrath.

In the tidy suburb where he lives, the local authorities have worked themselves into a paranoid lather of rage over his antics, and they've grown hysterical enough to bring in the PCs to crush him. Amazingly enough, they won't be the first parahumans to try.

Last year he was tormenting a city councilman who was trying to use "eminent domain" to throw elderly people out of their houses, so that he could sell the land to a real-estate developer, who could then build ugly high-priced townhomes for yuppies on top of it.

The developers did not care to have the likes of the Masked Weirdo nipping at their heels, and they actually hired no less a force of evil than the Crimson Shadow himself to annihilate Bob and his grubby little henchmen. See the Crimson Shadow's entry on Page 206 to find out all about this unpleasant old gentleman, and why anyone sane would be desperately afraid of him.

To everyone's shock the Masked Weirdo ran the Crimson Shadow out of town, bombarding him with pranks so strange that the old monster didn't know what to make of them, and fled in a panic. The developer has since backed away from the project, but they would be happy to support the PCs in their quest to eradicate the menace of the Masked Masked-Man.

Using The Masked Weirdo in Your Campaign:

The Masked Weirdo poses an interesting challenge for most PCs. He isn't evil and his victims are. Yet he's a criminal and his victims are by and large respectable folk. How is a superhero to deal with this conundrum?

Ideally the Player Characters shouldn't know any of this at first, and only gradually come to realize that he's something more than an entertainingly nutty villain. As they get to know more about him, his motivations and the kind of people he attacks, they should begin to wonder what side they're really on.

While Bob isn't coherent enough to execute complicated long-term plans, he does get extremely focused on his victim of the moment, and will make weird hell out of their life by one means or another until he is locked up or they leave town. Yet he never uses lethal force and he could certainly never bring himself to harm an innocent or an animal. His kids will immediately suggest that he kill any heroes they capture, but he'll always want to leave them in some ridiculous non-lethal "deathtrap" that won't actually hurt them.

If they actually come to grips with the Masked Weirdo most PCs will find him easy to defeat, so keep him out of their hands for as long as possible. Let him tease, taunt and bewilder them from afar. Only at the end of the scenario should they actually get to punch him out.

If he gets locked up, he'll be back time and again, escaping custody or getting broken out by his children. Sometimes he'll get thrown out on the street once the mental institution where he's imprisoned is too full to keep all its patients. While he's initially tied to his house, once he's lost it he'll move around the country in his "Weirdmobile" (a hideous green 1970s station wagon) spreading strangeness and havoc wherever he goes.

Adventures With the Masked Weirdo: 1) Sometimes a Masked Masked-Man Must Go Masked!

Someone breaks into an office supply warehouse and steals an enormous amount of library paste. They didn't touch the

printer cartridges or the laptop accessories, either one of which would have brought a good price from any fence in the city. Instead they took library paste, hundreds of gallons of it.

Just as the PCs are scratching their heads over this event, they hear that the mercenary supervillain who calls himself "God's Lightning" is back in town (see his description on Page 127). He's not currently wanted for anything, but it's creepy having him around, particularly in the wake of a big weird crime.

Then someone attacks a recycling center and makes off with thousands of old newspapers. If the PCs press the guards who were on duty that night, they admit that they were bribed to look the other way by some supervillain-looking guy. He gave them five bucks, some loose change and a cheeseburger (although in their defense, they were scared of him and probably would have let him just walk past if he hadn't stopped to bribe them).

As he drove the loot out of the warehouse with a forklift, one of the security guards was bold enough to ask him what he intended to do with all those newspapers. "*Destroy the world.*" he replied.

Later that same day, a different masked man (God's Lightning) dangles one of the security guards out a seventh story window by his feet until he tells him the same story. This is completely unnecessary. The guard would gladly have told him everything without being hung out a window, but God's Lightning is a creature of habit and he's used to getting information this way.

Then, terror strikes suburbia! Some maniac in a mask (the Masked Weirdo) has holed up in a local forest preserve with his henchmen, and he says that if his demands aren't met, he's going to "*commit a terrorist act*". The local media leaves the details oddly vague. They do not, for example, report what his demands are or what kind of "terrorist act" he's threatening to perform. It's as though the authorities are holding something back.

And they have good reason to keep certain elements of the case secret. It would

be very bad for them if some of the details got out.

Here's what's really going on. There is a small forest preserve near Bob Ditchfield's home. It's a humble little place, with a stream and some old-growth elm trees. Kids play there, animals live there, teenagers use it to drink beer and hold romantic trysts. Bob loves the preserve and so do his kids. So do most local residents, in fact.

The town authorities have announced a plan to hold a "controlled burn" on the site, setting it ablaze to rid it of invasive species and make it less vulnerable to wildfires. In fact they want to wreck and ruin it so thoroughly that nothing will grow there again. Then they can condemn the land and sell it to a huge cult called "The Human Potential Institute" which would like to build one of its massive, ugly Study Centers on the site.

It's easy for the PCs to find out that the deal is dirty. The contractor whom the town has hired has a long history of doing bad burns like this to kill off small wildlife refuges and nature preserves. The impending deal with the Human Potential Institute is a matter of public record, although they're being quiet about it.

Bob Ditchfield's kids have found out about the impending doom of their nature preserve and have come to their dad for help. Clearly the time has come for masked justice to go masked!

Bob has camped out in the woods and has issued a series of videotapes in which he's refused to leave, even if they set the woods on fire. Further, he claims to be building a device that will: *"crash the Earth into the Moon, and then crash the moon into the sun Except I guess it wouldn't be the Moon anymore once there's no Earth for it to be the moon of, how would that work exactly? I'm not sure—for there are many secrets man was not meant to know, mwa-ha-ha!"*

The town planners want this stopped as quickly and quietly as possible, before Bob manages to draw much attention to the issue. The local cops and state police don't want to go in after him, for they don't know what kind of powers he might have or

how dangerous he might be. Then the story leaks and while they're doing their best to spin it (to keep people from realizing that Bob is trying to protect the forest preserve, keep anyone from figuring out that he's a harmless crazy and above all keep the Human Potential Institute's name out of this) things may soon spiral out of control.

The PCs get called in to help—although the GM may not even need to do this. A lot of Player Characters will be itching to get in on the fight the moment they hear the words "terrorist" "supervillain" and "blackmail."

But they're not the only ones on their way. The Human Potential Institute has also found out about the Masked Weirdo's crusade, and they've used their extensive connections with organized crime to hire God's Lightning to rub him out. It's a good thing God's Lightning doesn't realize that Bob has kids, because he's exactly the kind of villain who would kill them first, just to rattle his opponent.

Bob and his boys have camped out near the center of the preserve, by some picnic tables and a huge ball of paper Mache. They have been dug a deep muddy pit nearby. Empty bottles of library paste and mountains of shredded newspaper lie everywhere around their camp.

The Masked Masked-Man is only too happy to explain his master plan to the heroes. His kids chime in, too, and with their help the PCs will actually come to understand what he is talking about. Make sure the PCs get to learn what is really going on here if they haven't done their homework and figured it out already.

Bob has more or less given up on crashing the earth into the moon and then crashing the moon into the sun—he finds the question about whether or not it would still be the moon (see above) too perplexing. Instead he wants to hollow out the earth and put a big bomb inside. That's why they're digging the hole.

"Don't worry," the Masked Weirdo reassures the PCs *"We're building another Earth for everyone to live on in case we have to blow the first one up."* He gestures at the huge ball of paper mache *"A better Earth, where my wife never left me."* For a

moment he gets all choked up and looks like he might start to cry, but he swiftly recovers. *"Few people grasp the awesome, limitless power of Paper Mache. You can make anything with it, if you dare!"*

At this moment God's Lightning attacks. Fortunately for Bob, he tries to take the PCs out first since they look more dangerous. If the Player Characters don't clobber him immediately, he slips on some paper mache and falls into the hole, losing consciousness just long enough for the Ditchfield kids to roll the huge ball down on top of him. He's hopelessly mired in the sticky glop when he returns to his senses a few moments later, and the boys have begun to jeer and throw stuff at him.

After God's Lightning recovers, the Masked Weirdo boasts: *"While you were unconscious I removed your brain and replaced it with an exact replica. And then, I removed your body and replaced it with an exact replica, too! It's all part of my diabolical master plan—a plan so evil and secret that I don't even know half of it myself!"*

To everyone's surprise God's Lightning is dumb enough to be taken in by this, and screams: *"Nooooo! You fiend! You monster! You \$%!@&[*?@#!<%*\$#&@*%\$!#>&@*?!!! Put them back! Put them back! I'll do anything you want! Anything!"*

At this point the PCs have enough leverage to get God's Lightning to tell them all about who has hired him and what he was asked to do. He's more than willing to go terrorize the mayor and town council into giving up the plan—which would of course save the forest preserve. He'll even do it without killing anybody, if the PCs think to ask. While it would be a lot more dangerous, he'd be willing to go take on the Human Potential Institute as well. He's so desperate to get his brain and body back that he'd do anything at all.

As for the Masked Masked-Man and his loyal henchmen, once their forest preserve is saved they vanish into the night, ready to keep the world safe for weirdness another day.



Wobbly-Bobbly



"They put the ants in my head to make me crazy, to make me have bones. But I was too smart for them and I dug all the bones back out of me again. See?"

PL: 9

Real Name: Unknown (doesn't even know himself)

Str: 13 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 28 (+9)

Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 8 (-1)

Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus** 7

Defense: 9 **Toughness Save:** 9

(Impervious) **Fortitude Save:** 9

Reflexes Save: 6 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Escape Artist 9 (+11), Notice 8 (+8), Stealth 5 (+7)

Feats: Ambidexterity, Diehard, Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Grapple

Powers: Additional Limbs 4 (Can form and use up to 10 additional limbs at once), Elongation 7, Immunity 3 (Poison, Pressure,

Suffocation 1), Impervious Toughness Save 9, Insubstantial 1 (Can become fluid and ooze through narrow spaces), Mind Shield 6, Regeneration 12 (Recovers from being Injured, Staggered or Disabled in one round of rest), Sensory Shield 6 (All Senses), Strike 4 (Extra: Mighty), Suffocate 9

Complications: Hopelessly insane, does things that make no sense and are detrimental to his own well being.

Background: A hapless street lunatic with a body made of stretchable, unstable matter. He's a paranoid schizophrenic and spends most of his time lost in crazed religious rapture. His beliefs derive more from his psychopathology than the Bible—he's forever ranting about boneless angels, floppy messiahs and God's formless, shapeless splendor. He says that Satan spoke seven words on each of the seven days of creation, and gave all things fixed, permanent shapes. God hates shapes, which are the work of Satan, especially the thrice-accursed triangle. Only those without shapes will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Hopelessly out of touch with reality, Wobbly-Bobbly makes a nuisance of himself in public and may well attack people for reasons that make no sense. He needs help and would probably respond well to medication, but because he's technically a supervillain, he's much more likely to get beaten up and terrorized by superheroes, which will make him meaner, crazier and more prone to violence.

Using Wobbly-Bobbly in Your

Campaign: What kind of villain Wobbly-Bobbly evolves into is largely up to the Player Characters. He's one of those foes who keep coming back after you send them to jail or a mental institution (although he usually isn't coherent enough to plan an escape, his powers make it difficult to contain him), and he should be a little different each time the PCs face him, depending on how they treated him in the past. If they traumatized him, he will be very upset when he sees them, and become more and more likely to take it out on the nearest bystander. He'll also grow more likely to use lethal force. If they were

gentle with him, then he will be increasingly disposed to listen to them and will attempt to calm himself down when they draw near.

It's difficult to reason with Wobbly Bobby, since he may not understand your words and may think you are saying something else entirely. You might try to tell him to calm down, or to ask him why he's so upset, and he'll think you're saying that Satan sent you from the 113th Quadrant of Hell to put aquatic insects in his brain (or something equally weird and threatening). However, if the PCs treated him decently last time, he becomes more lucid and more likely to understand them.

Whether or not Wobbly Bobby ever grows sane enough to re-enter normal society is up to the GM. His origins will remain a mystery in either case. Even when he's on medication and reasonably coherent, he doesn't know where he came from, who his parents were, or how he found out that he could stretch his body around like silly putty. His ideas on the subject are hopelessly tangled up with his religious delusions.

The GM should use him as a bridge to whatever sinister government conspiracy or fiendish madman illegally creates super-beings in your campaign world. Or, make him one of the horrible Doctor Zed's lost illegitimate children, in which case the Doctor may appear and try to eat him at some point in the campaign (see the write-up on this disturbed individual on Page 219)

Adventures With Wobbly-Bobbly:

1) Pursued and Tormented by Nothing

Wobbly-Bobbly grows frantic—convinced that a fiend called Doctor Nothing stalks him by night, whispering terrible things in his ear as he sleeps, painting threatening messages to him on the walls of buildings and telling the CIA to implant secret transmitters under his skin that will make him think crazy thoughts. The Player Characters must help him, he pleads. He'll do anything, he'll even take his medication, if they can stop Doctor Nothing's evil scheme.

It may be difficult for the PCs to calm him down, since his dementia will distort whatever they try to say to him. The funny thing is, although he looks very, very

agitated, worse than they've ever seen him before, he actually seems to be trying to hold himself together—very odd for a paranoid schizophrenic in the throes of a delusional episode.

And in fact it's not a delusional episode. While Doctor Nothing hasn't spoken with the CIA or implanted any transmitters under Wobbly Bobby's skin, the rest of the story is all true.

Doctor Nothing is a homeless schizoid named Ruell Choate. He's isn't anywhere near as powerful as Wobbly-Bobbly (he's just a normal PL1 wino) but he's much more angry and aggressive. Mr. Choate is jealous of Wobbly-Bobbly and has decided to become a supervillain himself. Wobbly-Bobbly is his arch-nemesis, Choate has decided, and he will persecute him until he is stopped or Wobbly-Bobbly freaks out and kills him, whichever comes first.

Choate has made himself a mask and stolen a cape somewhere, and he actually looks pretty threatening in them. When Dr. Nothing gets really worked up he thinks he has all sorts of superhuman powers and he's great at delivering crazed, theatrical supervillain rants (although they always sound just a little too incoherent).

As the PCs attempt to quell poor Wobbly-Bobbly's fears, they will find disturbing evidence that Dr. Nothing may be real. Someone really has been leaving threatening graffiti messages where Wobbly-Bobbly can find them. Perhaps they glimpse a cloaked figure vanishing down an alley or over a distant rooftop. Be fair and give them a chance to figure out what is going on before they hit Doctor Nothing with any PL10 attacks and kill him.

If any of the PCs with access to sophisticated super-science scans Wobbly-Bobbly's body, they find that there really is a tiny transmitter hidden under his skin. Doctor Nothing certainly didn't put it there. So who did?

The Fiendish Doctor Nothing

PL: 1

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 11 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 1 **Defense:** 1
Toughness Save: 1 **Fortitude Save:** 2
Reflexes Save: 0 **Willpower Save:** 1

Skills: Bluff 5 (+6), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 5 (+5), Profession (whatever he did before he was homeless) 4 (+4), Profession (can collector) 5 (+5), Search 4 (+4), Stealth 2 (+2)

Complications: Nuts. Thinks he's an arch-villain, despite all the evidence to the contrary.

2) Let Triangles Beware!

Wobbly-Bobbly has endured the thousand torments and insults inflicted daily upon him by the shape men call the triangle for longer than anyone could bear, but even his iron resolve has finally reached its limit. He declares war on all triangles, everywhere. It's him or them—and this time, it's personal!

Wobbly-Bobbly goes on a foaming cross-town rampage, attacking anything triangular that he stumbles across. Mostly he attacks street signs, at first, but eventually he'll start to notice triangles in all sorts of other places. Panic ensues and people flee as word spreads that there's a supervillain running amok downtown. The PCs are called in and the SWAT teams and anti-superhuman squads are on their way.

It shouldn't take the PCs long to figure out what motivates Wobbly-Bobbly, and that he's not really a threat to anyone's life. They should also be able to guess from the pattern of his attacks that he will eventually see and head for some vaguely triangular public landmark, intent on smashing it (we'll leave the specifics undetermined to make this easier to work into your campaign city).

Unfortunately, the SWAT team is all keyed up and ready to unleash lethal harm on Wobbly-Bobbly if he doesn't surrender at once—which of course he's much too crazy to do. Can the PCs intervene and subdue Wobbly-Bobbly before he gets himself killed?

Typical SWAT Team Member

PL: 6

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 4 (+1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Intimidate 4 (+5), Medicine 2 (+3), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+5), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (policeman) 5 (+6), Stealth 5 (+6)

Feats: Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment)

Equipment: Body Armor (4 Toughness), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire]), Tonfa (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage)

CHAPTER 2: MODERATE THREATS

CALEB THE HUNTER



"I knowed I was to be a bounty hunter when I first saw that movie Navy SEALs. Woo! Charlie @\$%&! Sheen, man! He's one bad @\$%&! Irishman! And I saw it and I was all like—EXTREME! Except I guess nobody said 'extreme' back then. Back then I was more like—'Awesome to the Max!' And anyway that's how the whole valiant saga all begun. You want some more tater tots, Grandma?"

Real Name: Caleb Dinkleman
PL: 10

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 8 (-1) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 7 **Attack Bonus:** 12
Defense: 10 (3 if he is caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 8 (4 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 10 **Reflexes Save:** 8 **Willpower Save:** -2

Skills: Acrobatics 7 (+10), Climb 7 (+12), Drive 8 (+11), Gather Information 4 (+4), Intimidate 12 (+12), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 1 (+0)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Choke-Hold, Dodge Focus 7, Endurance, Evasion 2, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Pin, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Quick-Draw, Rage 2, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack

Equipment: Body Armor (8 pts Protection), Big Fake Commando Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Sawed-Off Pistolgrip Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage), Motorcycle (Vehicle; Size: Medium; Strength 15; Speed 5; Defense 10; Toughness: 8)

Complications: Foolhardy and unable to resist his impulses.

Background: Why a soldier this gifted is wasting his talents as a bail bondsman is difficult to understand—at least until you meet him. Stupid, friendly and violent, he's as big as an ox and as silly as a child.

A phenomenal athlete, seemingly impervious to pain and fear, he would be an asset to any of the world's elite military units. If, that is, he could be trusted to tie his own shoelaces. He's desperate for respect and wants to be feared, but he craves affection and comradeship even more.

Raised by his grandma in small-town Ohio, Caleb never participated in organized athletics. He was more of a metalhead and a stoner who lifted weights in the basement. Even among his fellow heavy-metal kids he was a big sullen outsider—into Winger and Poison while the

other guys turned on to Metallica and Anthrax.

Inarticulate and frustrated by it, he picked a lot of fights and always seemed to win them. This landed him in juvenile hall more than once. There he made friends, picked up some tattoos, lifted weights and got in still more fights.

By the time he was 17 the teachers, school administrators and cops were so afraid of him that the local authorities began actively trying to run him and his grandmother out of town. Caleb took the hint and joined the Navy as soon as he could, with the lowest possible score on his written exam. He hoped to become a Navy SEAL and then a bounty hunter (although it's not exactly clear how he thought the one job would lead to the other).

Most Navy SEALs have IQs well above the norm. Intelligence is normally one of the most important criteria they select for. Commandoes need to be able to think on their feet and make swift decisions under fire. There's no room for a big dumb lummoX in an outfit like the SEALs. Unless of course you're as big as Caleb. By his nineteenth birthday he was already as strong as a lot of Olympic weightlifters and seemed to have an unlimited capacity to soak up pain. Plus, he was so desperate to be a SEAL, so eager to please and to ingratiate himself that the naval administrative officers felt a lot of sympathy for him.

He barely made it into the SEAL program, graduating from training dead last in his class, despite being by far the biggest, strongest man in his unit. He was good at following orders under fire, but terrible at improvising or at getting anything done without close supervision. Foolish, trusting, easily mislead and prone to acts of impulsive violence, he got into all sorts of trouble off-duty. They kicked him out of the program after just six months. He never went on any missions.

Surprisingly, his dishonorable discharge didn't bother him very much, since it was always part of his plan to leave the SEALs and become a bounty hunter at some point. He still wasn't sure how to get to be a bounty hunter (or for that matter

what a bounty hunter was, exactly), but while he was working as a bouncer in Duluth he watched some episodes of the show "Renegade" on UHF and figured it all out. A "bounty hunter," he learned, is actually a slang term for "bail bondsman". He immediately signed on with a local bail bond agency and started putting scumbags behind bars.

He's had to change agencies and leave town more than once. As a bondsman, he's a disaster. It's not good for someone like Caleb to be out running around unsupervised with a gun in his hand. Frankly he shouldn't even be driving a motorcycle (which is in any case an absurd vehicle to use for this kind of work—how is he supposed to transport prisoners with it?) He has quite a reputation among his fellow bondsmen, both as the roughest, toughest SOB in the business and as a hilarious, awful goof-up. Despite his fame, he's only made a moderate success of his business and during slow spells he has to go live with his grandma.

As you might expect, he's prone to making mistakes and using excessive force. More than once he has broken in on the wrong person, mistaken them for a suspect, beaten them savagely, terrorized them and put handcuffs on them. He usually panics and runs away when he realized that he's nabbed the wrong person, sometimes leaving them bloody and handcuffed for hours until help arrives. He feels really embarrassed about these mistakes and the way other bondsmen tease him about them. If it happens again he may lose his self-control and kill the "suspect" to keep them from talking.

Using Caleb the Hunter in Your

Campaign: If one of your players has a "bounty hunter" or a mercenary "hero-for-hire" character, then Caleb is the competition—the other super-bounty-hunter, the one who cuts corners, does disreputable stuff and gives the profession a bad name. He'll try to swipe perps out from under them because he doesn't know any better, he'll get into fights with them over stupid stuff and generally make for a good semi-comic nemesis. He may also decide

that a “dark” or “outlaw” PC is raw, and start hanging around them trying to be their friend. He’s frightening company, overbearing and prone to explosive tantrums, but at least he’s desperate to please.

Inwardly rather shy, Caleb has a terrible habit of letting his fists talk for him when he gets tongue-tied, which happens often. He uses a lot of outdated slang, some of it seemingly cribbed from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Caleb gets really mad if anyone, friend or foe, points out that nobody actually says “rad” anymore. Being his friend can swiftly turn into being his enemy.

While he likes to think of himself as a good guy, Caleb could easily be tempted into participating in an out-and-out crime. Muscle work would tend to be his thing. He’s unlikely to rob any banks—unless of course his grandma loses her mortgage or needs an operation that Medicare won’t pay for. He may also fly off the handle and kill somebody in a rage. While he claims to live by a *“Warriors Code, like they had in th’ olden days”* and wouldn’t normally take hostages or lash out at innocent bystanders, if he gets cornered and panics there is no telling what he might do. He also can’t stand losing fights, and if one isn’t going his way he’ll fight dirty. Not normally a killer, he has no sense of restraint and could easily kill someone by accident. In fact it would be a miracle if he hasn’t already, at some point, even though he’s never been indicted for it.

Adventures With Caleb the Hunter: 1) Opps, I Did it Again

Caleb the Hunter breaks down the door of a seedy motel room near the airport. He thinks he’s here to capture Wanda Grillo, a Mob mistress who jumped bail in Philadelphia. Alas, this is the wrong room. He beats up and handcuffs Lorna and Hubert Boone, a perfectly innocent middle-aged couple from Dallas, in front of their kids and drags Mrs. Boone halfway to his motorcycle before he realizes his mistake.

The elder Boones are later found dead in their motel room. Mr. Boone has been shot, his wife has been smothered. Their kids were hiding in the bathroom

when the killings happened, but they identify Caleb as the man who broke into the room and subdued their parents.

Briefly taken into custody, Caleb swears that he has been set up, breaks out and goes riding off on a stolen motorcycle to clear his name. He knows perfectly well that he’s guilty. He freaked out, smothered both Boones with a pillow to keep them from telling anyone how badly he’d screwed up and then snuck off (he forgot about their kids). But as he “investigates” the crime, he slowly convinces himself that he really has been set up. The Player Characters are called in to catch him. He’ll avoid coming to grips with them directly, carrying on his hopeless, near-random “investigation” for as long as he can. He keeps calling the PCs up on the phone to lamely protest his innocence.

The strange part is, he’s almost right. Wanda Grillo was in fact staying at that motel, although in a different room. The reason she jumped bail in the first place was that the Mob was out to kill her, fearful that she would turn states’ evidence and betray their secrets. Caleb did smother Mrs. Boone to death, but her husband survived the attack. Unfortunately for him, the Mafia hit squad sent to assassinate Wanda Grillo made the same mistake as Caleb, and they shot him in his bed just a few minutes after Caleb left.

The Philadelphia mob is confused about what happened—they’re hearing conflicting reports, but they’re pretty sure that some oaf called Caleb the Hunter is going around the PCs’ home city asking questions and investigating the killing, talking about some kind of conspiracy. As the PCs hunt the hunter, the mob will be hunting them both. And neither Wanda Grillo nor her heavily armed, trigger happy boyfriend Donny “the Gatman” Stegnetti will like the idea of superheroes or bounty hunters getting so close to them.

2) Million-Dollar Beating

An accountant named Nora Chang has stolen an immense amount of money from the Mexican Mafia, and given it all away to charity. She has severely wounded one branch of the Cartel by doing this, but

not enough to put them out of business entirely. Arrested for the crime, she is already on her way to becoming a folk hero when she skips bail and vanishes.

Nora can't afford to spend as much as a single night in jail—the people she stole from have contacts all across America and will have her killed (horribly) within hours of being incarcerated. Because of the vast sum she stole, Nora had to post a truly colossal bond, and the bounty on her head is a cool million dollars. Bounty hunters from all across America are going to try to cash in on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and Caleb the Hunter is one of them.

How this plays out depends on who the Player Characters are. If they are themselves bounty hunters, then their objective is to capture Nora Chang and transport her several thousand miles across country to the city where she has been arraigned (pick somewhere very distant from the PCs home city).

As the PCs hunt for Nora Chang, Caleb and lots of other scumbag bondsmen are trailing them and/or one another. As soon as the PCs grab Nora, Caleb will waylay them and try to make off with her himself. This can turn into a running battle, with Caleb and other bounty hunters grabbing Nora Chang back and forth from one another, interrupted from time to time by attacks from the Mexican Mafia's hit squads. To spice things up, the mob will start sending in supervillains once their regular troops fail to beat the PCs. Perhaps God's Lightning (see Page 127) gets assigned to the job.

If the PCs are more traditional superheroes, then they probably sympathize with Ms. Chang's plight and don't care about the million dollar bounty. They may be able to arrange for some federal agency to take her under its protection or they may know some safe place where she could hide indefinitely (Atlantis? A lost moonbase? Another dimension?). In this case Caleb dogs their heels, desperate for his bounty, too dumb to see that if he catches Nora he will be sending her to her death.

Whichever version you use, Ms. Chang is easy enough to find. Nora's mother is very sick and she's on her way to visit her

on a farm a few miles out of the PCs' home town. Nora is certain that she will die soon, and wants to see her mother one last time.

Nora Chang

PL: 3

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 10 (+0)
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus** 0 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 0 **Fortitude Save:** 0
Reflexes Save: 3 **Willpower Save:** 5

Skills: Diplomacy 6 (+8), Knowledge (Civics) 8 (+12), Languages (English, Chinese, French), Notice 5 (+7), Profession (Accountant) 8 (+12)

Feats: Interpose, Skill Mastery (Diplomacy, Knowledge [Civics], Notice, Profession [Accountant])

Complications: Too compassionate for her own good, can't resist the opportunity to help someone in need, even if it's her enemy, incapable of making herself physically harm anyone

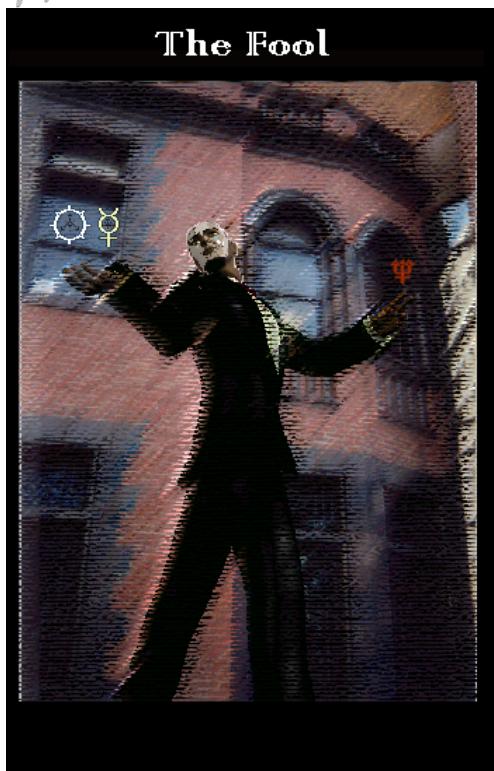
3) A Filthy Business

Caleb's grandmother is about to lose her mortgage. Desperate to help, her poor addled grandson plans to rob a bank in the PCs' home town. The problem is, he doesn't have a plan, so he tries to drum up some partners in crime.

Alas, Caleb has a violent falling out with his new partners (a gang called the "Filthy Brothers") and critically injures three of them. The remaining five Filthies, Papa Filthy, Mama Filthy, Baby Filthy, Big Bad Filthy and The Lovely Miss Filthy take umbrage, and tip off the Player Characters. They also lie in wait for Caleb in case the PCs fail to take him down. However, he has decided to rob a different bank. Word reaches the PCs that a bank across town is being robbed, and when they take off to stop it, the Filthies follow them.

Caleb does pretty well for a beginner—he doesn't even kill anybody. Unfortunately, he only gets away with two thousand dollars—nowhere near enough to help his grandma. He's forced to go running all over town, weeping with shame as he robs banks and dodges both the PCs and the Filthy Brothers.

HARLEQUIN 9



"Good match. You fought bravely and well. Do you need an ambulance? Just nod if you do."

Real Name: Unknown (unless the GM assigns him one)

PL: 10

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 24 (+7) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 11 **Attack Bonus:** 14
Defense: 13
Toughness Save: 8 (4 if he is caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 8 **Reflexes Save:** 10 **Willpower Save:** 10

Skills: Acrobatics 12 (+19), Diplomacy 7 (+9), Escape Artist 10 (+17), Gather Information 8 (+10), Notice 10 (+13), Search 8 (+11), Sense Motive 10 (+13), Stealth 10 (+17)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Acrobatic Bluff, Assessment, Blind-Fight, Connected, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Evasion, Improved Block, Improved Disarm,

Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Weapon Bind

Complications: Always fights fair, won't endanger noncombatants. Won't betray his employer under any circumstances, no matter what.

Background: An unarmed combat expert who dresses like a clown. He offers his services for hire to anyone who can pay, and forms no long-term alliances. He constantly changes his makeup, and seldom looks the same twice.

Despite his face paint, Harlequin 9 is no giggling, maniacal clown of crime. He is instead a consummate professional—quiet, dependable and discreet. An honorable opponent, he fights fair, keeps his word and treats his foes with respect. He's the kind of enemy who might loan you cab fare to the emergency room after a fight and will certainly ask if you're okay.

We know little about his background and personal history. He is a black man, his favored martial arts style looks like some kind of European kickboxing and he reportedly lives somewhere in the south of France, but his country of origin remains totally obscure. While his physical capabilities are just barely superhuman (he is slightly faster than an Olympic sprinter and somewhat more nimble than an Olympic Gymnast) it's unclear how he gained them.

Very concerned with protecting his identity, he speaks carefully correct, formal English with no detectable accent or regionalisms. He never uses contractions or slang and seems completely devoid of personal mannerisms.

For some reason, he carries custom-designed tarot cards with him, which bear his image (see the illustration at the top of this page). Sometimes he leaves one at the scene of a crime, but he's not obsessive about it. It's possible that these cards serve the role of promotional fliers, and are intended to drum up more business.

While he never talks about most personal matters, he's surprisingly open

about why he dresses as a clown and calls himself Harlequin 9. If anyone asks him, he explains that clown makeup is the closest you can come to wearing a mask that conceals your identity but won't draw unwanted attention. A clown isn't inconspicuous, of course, but at least you don't immediately call the police when you see one. And it's hard to identify a clown to the authorities, particularly if he keeps changing his makeup.

He calls himself Harlequin 9 because that's the number you call to contact him, backwards. Dial 964 873-5724 into any GTE payphone and it will connect you with his message service. The phone will seem to go totally dead once you punch in the number—there isn't even a dial tone, but rest assured, he hears you. Why it has to be a GTE phone remains a mystery, like so much about Harlequin 9.

Using Harlequin 9 in Your Campaign: A capable, competent villain for hire, Harlequin 9 only shows up when he's paid to. He doesn't hold grudges and he won't seek revenge, even against a PC who beat him badly.

He wants to know as little about his clients as possible, and never deviates from the mission plans they give him. He can be trusted absolutely. Even if his employer is dishonorable or contemptible, he'll protect their interests to the death. For it's not the client he's loyal to—it's his own personal code, and his code is more important to him than his life.

Not exactly an assassin, he is capable of murder, but regards it as unprofessional and a sign of failure. It gets the police much too interested. He's not a burglar or a thief—his skills are pretty much limited to stealth and combat.

You can hire him to beat someone up, protect a person or a thing, transport a person or thing safely, or guard a specific location. He'll consider other kinds of jobs if they sound interesting, but he won't take on something he doesn't have the skills to accomplish. You probably won't find him robbing banks or jewelry stores, but he's exactly the kind of high-level henchman who might serve as a master villain's personal

bodyguard, or the kind of out-of-town specialist who might get sent in to beat up meddlesome PCs. As an added twist, once the PCs figure out what he's like, they could hire him themselves.

Adventures With Harlequin 9

1) Showdown at Sweetness, Inc.

Harlequin 9 is hired by a huge fat evil businessman named Woodrow Memling Sload, whose affairs the Player Characters have meddled in one time too many. A sweaty, corrupt, whining infant of a man, Mr. Sload's business as a slumlord has not gone well of late and in desperation he has tried to rescue his failing business empire by financing a drug deal or two. At least one of the PCs has foiled one of these deals, and cost Sload dearly. He's too cowardly (and strangely, too decent) to want to have them killed. Instead he wants them beaten and humiliated for his own personal satisfaction.

Sload and some of his henchmen confront the PC in some deserted spot at night. Nervous and giggling, he explains his grievance and tells the PCs that they can't begin to understand the pain they've caused him. Little people don't feel things the way the rich do. But he will find a way to make them comprehend it. Then he turns Harlequin 9 loose on them.

Whether he wins or loses the fight, the kung-fu clown behaves himself honorably and may well win the Player Characters' respect. If the PC is winning, Sload leaves early, before they have a chance to chase him down. If they lose, he comments to one of his thugs that he's disappointed. He thought having the PC beaten would cheer him up, but instead he just feels empty and kind of sorry for them. In either case, Mr. Sload warns the PCs as he prepares to leave that the authorities will be uninterested in prosecuting him—he owns them. This is true, at least at first.

But then a funny thing happens. Thanks to the PCs' efforts, Sload's empire comes crumbling down around his ears. He loses his money, he loses his influence, warrants are out for his arrest and he's near the point of suicide.

With the wolves closing in from all sides, Mr. Sload leaks his whereabouts to

the PCs. He's hiding out in the deserted offices of "Sweetness Inc." a candy distribution firm he recently acquired as a side venture. He's waiting for them up on the second floor, in what would have been his office (it contains nothing but a single chair and a box of rubber bands).

Most of Sload's henchmen have already turned on him, in fact some of them are leaving in disgust just as the PCs arrive at the offices of Sweetness Inc. They will refuse to fight, claiming that they're off-duty now, and will gladly direct the PCs to the service entrance. They'll even give them the key, if they like. There are still a few dispirited thugs left in the building, who the PCs are going to have to fight their way through, including a pair of crazy martial artist twins named Willie and Kevin Muggeridge. The Muggeridge brothers are so tweaked-up on speed that they feel neither pain nor fear and will fight 'til they drop. About half of the others will run away if confronted. And in front of Mr. Sload's door stands Harlequin 9. He smiles politely when he sees the Player Characters and asks how they are doing.

He's perfectly aware that Woodrow Sload is an unworthy boss to go down fighting for, but he will stand his ground until the PCs defeat him, anyway.

On the far side of the door, in his empty office, Woodrow Memling Sload prepares to set himself on fire in front of the PCs, to show them what they have done to him. He will have to be rescued from himself quickly, for he's about to light the match.

The Muggeridge Brothers

PL: 6

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 15 (+2)
Int: 13 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 8 **Attack Bonus** (Melee): 9
Defense: 9 (4 if caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 5
Reflexes Save: 7 **Willpower Save:** 5

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+10), Bluff 8 (+10), Intimidate 8 (+10), Notice 4 (+7), Stealth 5 (+8)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Dodge Focus 5, Evasion, Fearless, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Set-Up, Startle,

Takedown Attack

Generic Sload Thug/Bodyguard

PL: 3

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 3 (1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Bluff 2 (+3), Climb 2 (+4), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 6 (+7), Knowledge (Streetwise) 3 (+3), Notice 4 (+4), Search 4 (+4), Sense Motive 4 (+4), Stealth 2 (+3)

Feats: Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw, Taunt

Equipment: Body Armor (3 toughness) Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

Woodrow Memling Sload

PL: 3

Str: 9 (-1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Diplomacy 6 (+9), Intimidate 6 (+9), Knowledge (Business) 6 (+9), Notice 4 (+4), Profession (Businessman) 6 (+9), Sense Motive 6 (+3), Stealth 2 (+2)

Feats: Benefit (Rich Guy with powerful friends), Connected, Taunt

2) Freddy and the Clown-Man

Harlequin 9 gets in touch. He has a deal to offer the PCs. He will be attacking two buildings tonight, and possibly as third—he isn't sure. All three are sure to be full of bloodthirsty criminal scum, so if the PCs would like to tag along behind him, they are welcome to have any thugs he leaves incapacitated. He knows they like apprehending criminals, so he thought he'd give them first pick.

He's as good as his word, and will attack first a small metal-working shop in a shabby industrial district by the airport, and then a huge, tacky, heavily guarded mansion way out in the suburbs. Both locations are indeed full of vicious thugs from the Korean Mafia and a biker gang (the

“Sons of the Shrieking Silence”) which owes them fealty. Harlequin 9 does his best to stay out of the clutches of both the Player Characters and the gangsters, fighting his way through both locations like Bruce Lee in a clown mask. Every time he beats someone up he asks them *“Where is Freddy?”*

After leaving the mansion, just barely one jump ahead of the Player Characters, he goes to a boarded-up fast food restaurant in a crummy part of town, breaks in, finds that the place is empty, notices a tiny clue that the PCs can't seem to find and races off to intercept an armored limousine, out on the freeway. There he will find Freddy, guarded by three hulking thugs and the silver-haired, genteel leader of the Korean crime family.

Who is Freddy? He's a three-year old boy who Harlequin 9 was hired to protect, and who got kidnapped out from under his nose. Freddy knows and likes the “Clown Man” and will be delighted to see him. Freddy's father is either a money launderer for the Russian Mob, or else he's the major supervillain of your choice. Use whichever big, ominous, scary villain you fancy. It's probably best if it's someone who the PCs could never possibly imagine as a dad. If the PCs get in a real jam, perhaps Freddy's dad shows up to rescue him in person.

Sample Korean Gangster

PL: 2

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 2 **Defense:** 2
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2
Reflexes Save: 2 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Intimidate 4 (+4), Languages (English, Korean), Knowledge (Streetwise) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+6), Search 5 (+7)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Improved Block, Improved Grapple, Startle

Equipment: Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

Sons of the Shrieking Silence

PL: 2

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 2 **Defense:** 2
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2
Reflexes Save: 2 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Bluff 3 (+3), Drive 5 (+7), Gather Information 4 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+4), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 6 (+8)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Move-By Action

Equipment: Motorcycle (Vehicle; Size: Medium; Strength 15; Speed 5; Defense 10; Toughness: 8), Machete (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage),

ROSE RED



"The problem with genocide, of course, is that it doesn't go far enough."

Real Name: Rose Reddington

PL: 10

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 15 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 13 (+1)
Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus:** 10
Defense: 10 (4 if she is caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 10 (7 Impervious, 3 without her Force Field) **Fortitude Save:** 7
Reflexes Save: 7 **Willpower Save:** 8

Skills: Bluff 9 (+10), Diplomacy 6 (+7), Gather Information 7 (+8), Intimidate 9 (+10), Notice 7 (+10), Profession (Spy) 5 (+7), Search 6 (+9), Sense Motive 5 (+8), Stealth 5 (+9)

Feats: Assessment, Attractive, Connected, Contact, Dodge Focus 6, Power Attack, Sneak Attack, Startle

Powers: Force-Field 7 (Extra: Impervious), Telekinesis 10 (Power Feat: Alternate Powers [Blast, Flight])

Complications: Bigot (finds it impossible to work with members of other ethnic groups, even if it would be to her advantage, always attacks these targets first, even if better or more important targets are available)

Background: One of Britain's greatest counter-espionage agents—someone really should have checked her personal beliefs more carefully before they gave her superpowers and turned her loose on the public. A fifteen year veteran of the UK's shadow war in Northern Ireland, she had a reputation within MI-6 as a tough, ruthless, efficient agent who would do whatever it took to accomplish a mission. This was certainly true. It was also true that she used excessive force, brutalized civilians, tortured people indiscriminately and did these things out of a pathological hatred of the Irish. But she got results and her immediate superiors were so desperate for results that they were willing to conceal the less savory aspects of her character.

In the mid nineties MI-6 was casting about for super-agents. After some bad experiences with parahumans who only obeyed orders when it suited them to, they wanted someone they could control. Preferably a trusted agent, already familiar with the agency and its work, already deeply committed to their goals. Rose seemed like the ideal candidate. MI-6 and the Irish conflict were her whole life. She was sent to a secret medical facility in the Orkneys and rebuilt into something more than human—and perhaps a little bit less.

Unfortunately, the Irish peace process began shortly thereafter. Old enemies began putting their grudges aside and coming together to rebuild Northern Ireland, deals were made, ancient hatreds assuaged. It was enough to drive her mad.

Rose Red constantly insisted to the higher-ups that the peace process was a sham, that the IRA was just maneuvering for a better position to strike from, but it did no good. To her disgust, Britain was as committed to peace as the Irish.

Before long she stopped responding to headquarters, and launched her own one-woman war on the IRA. Then her own side sold her out to the opposition and then they sent her former comrades to murder her. Ironically, most of the assassins that Her Majesty's Secret Service put on her trail were themselves hard-core nationalists, as afraid of the war's end as Rose was. In fact nearly all of them were her colleagues—not

friends exactly (she never had any of those) but lads she'd gone on dirty missions with for years. She killed a lot of them, as well as a lot of the IRA's most violently fanatical loyalists, and by doing so she actually helped speed up the peace process by removing many of the people who most fiercely opposed it.

There was no way she could continue to hide in a place as small as Northern Ireland indefinitely. So she hired out to the Bosnian Serbs for a while and killed Croatian Catholics instead of Irish ones. It wasn't the same. Anyway their cause collapsed and everyone went on the run in just a few short years. She wanted to join up with the Russians and go kill some Chechens, but they didn't trust her and tried to sell her out to MI-6. So she came to America instead. There are a lot of Irish living in America, but she'll see if she can change that.

Using Rose Red Your Campaign: A cunning psychopathic serial killer hiding behind the British flag, Rose is here to cause havoc and die gloriously. She hates anyone of color—African Americans, Hispanics, Arabs and so forth. But her particular venom she saves for the Irish, regardless of their accent, age or appearance. She will try to hunt down people who give big donations to the IRA, but she assumes that includes any prosperous American of Irish descent.

She still has her MI-6 credentials and her diplomatic passport and if the PCs confront her she'll wave them in their faces and claim to be on official British government business. Their own intelligence services know all about her activities, she assures them.

Amazingly, there are still people in MI-6 who regard her as a patriot and who are still willing to shield her now that she's killing people on American soil. They can supply her with equipment and information, give her access to their safehouses or perhaps even let her spend a night at a British Embassy, but there are limits to their ability to help her.

PCs will probably find her chilling company. She seldom speaks and then only to get something she wants. Sadistic but not

much excited by torture, she prefers to kill cleanly but that's the limit of her self-restraint. She'll take hostages, strike from ambush or any other low and dirty tactic that occurs to her. She has no pursuits or interests apart from her crusade and no ambitions apart from dying in a glorious blood-soaked conflagration at the end of her rampage. She won't bother with being a hero's enemy—she already has millions of enemies to kill and not enough time to do it in.

Yet despite her suave accent and eerie calm, she has no sense of fair play. She claims to live by a personal code, but it only governs her behavior toward other upper-class Britons. She can treat anyone else however she likes. Mostly she likes to kill them.

Adventures With Rose Red: 1) Painting the Town Bloody Red

Somebody kills three black kids on their way to school. It's a completely senseless crime—none of the kids were robbed, all of them came from solid, stable working-class homes, none had any involvement with gangs. The forensic evidence shows that someone with the ability to fly must have killed them. All three kids were dropped from a great height, much higher than the roofs of any of the surrounding buildings.

The whole city is on edge after the killings, there are angry murmurs about super-racists and people start looking askance at the PCs. It's imperative that somebody bring the killer to justice and soon

While the PCs are trying to untangle the mystery, they get word that a scary-looking guy with an eyepatch and an Irish accent has been asking questions about the killings. Then a sudden eruption of violence in the suburbs distracts them. Seamus Riley, shady real-estate tycoon and possible Irish mobster, gets killed by a flying superwoman who bursts into his huge tasteless house while he's watching a basketball game with a dozen or so friends. A surprising number of his guests were carrying loaded firearms.

Not long thereafter, the PCs stumble

across Rose Red on a rooftop overlooking a crummy Irish bar called the “Black Emerald.” She won’t attack them on sight, even if some of them belong to ethnicities she dislikes, and she’s willing to talk.

Rose Red tells them that she is an agent of the British Government, here in the US to cut off the funding for the most radical factions of the IRA. The Irish-American mob has long been their best source of money and she’s here to disrupt the flow. But now she has problems of her own. The IRA has got wind of her, and they’ve sent one of their best assassins out on her trail. He’s a one-eyed man known only as “Tommy Lean”. While he’s no superhuman, he’s skilled and ruthless enough to make things difficult for Rose. The PCs would do a lot of good if they can help stop him for her. He’s killed and stolen the credentials of an MI-5 operative named Wallace Painter so he’s probably traveling under that name. But he’ll be easy to spot in any case—he’s a huge man with an eyepatch, a thick Irish brogue and a taste for turtleneck sweaters. He’s probably hiding out at that bar down there, but it’s full of murderous Irish gangsters so she can’t risk just walking in the front door.

At this moment someone throws a young man in a Boston Celtics jersey out the bar window. Mean Irish gangbangers race out the front door and begin to stomp the kid savagely. Rose Red swoops down and attacks. The PCs may follow her. Even if they don’t, they get spotted and the gang kids open fire on them from the street. These kids are crazy, hopped up on crank and cheap booze, ready to go down fighting for no reason at all. Which is also why they’re kicking the kid in the Celtics jersey to death—no particular reason.

Rose Red acquits herself well in the fight, although she’s a little too quick to use lethal force and has an unsettling habit of dropping opponents from a great height. She vanishes after the battle. A lot of scary gangster types are still inside the bar. They all claim not to have seen anything.

Shortly after the fight, a great big one-eyed man in a turtleneck shows up and introduces himself to the PCs as Agent Painter of MI-5. While he knows he has no

official jurisdiction on American soil, he would greatly appreciate the PCs’ help with an investigation. He’s pursuing a psychopathic hate-killer named Rose Red. She’s a superhuman, much too tough for him to handle by himself. He’s sure she was here tonight and that the PCs saw her. What can they tell him about her?

Whether or not the PCs pound Agent Painter into the asphalt, the next day Rose Red kills an Irish-American businessman named Michael Donleavy, who has strong ties to the city council and to the local archdiocese. She drags poor Mr. Donleavy out the window of his office in broad daylight, in front of his six horrified sons, and lets him plunge to his death. Donleavy’s sons are all burly young men who play college football, and if approached by superheroes they go berserk and attack them, blaming the superhuman “community” (whatever that means) for their father’s death.

Subsequent investigation reveals that Donleavy was clean, that he had no ties to either the IRA or to organized crime. Now the City Council and the Mayor’s office are loudly calling for the apprehension of whoever killed him, while the black community is outraged that the death of one white businessman merits more attention from the authorities than three African-American schoolchildren. Some very hard words are being said against superhumans, as well.

Rose Red starts to feel depressed, so to cheer herself up she kills another black kid. The city is now ready to explode. Then a superhero the PCs don’t like (preferably a white one) makes some rather insensitive remarks about the city’s black community to a TV reporter. He’s actually being quoted out of context, but this ratchets the tension up to the point where the city may be on the verge of riots.

Wally Painter really is an agent of MI-5. He’s still on the case and he’ll confront the PCs at least one more time. Have him appear whenever the PCs seem at a loss as to what to do next. This time he’s desperate and he’s willing to tell the Player Characters the truth about who and what Rose Red really is and how culpable British

Intelligence is in her crimes.

If the PCs think to stake out other places where Irish Gangsters congregate, Rose Red will show up eventually. Pick some appropriate location—a shabby bar called the “Castle Killarney,” a scary warehouse down by the docks, a huge used-car lot watched over by a giant inflatable leprechaun or whatever would work best for a big climactic fight in your campaign.

The PCs may well have to fight beside Rose Red at first—the Irish gangs are completely paranoid by now, they're all packing heavy weaponry and ready for an assault. At the first sign of a cape they'll open fire with as many automatic weapons as they can bring to bear.

Still, the PCs will probably win this battle, whether they attack Rose Red or assist her. No pack of gun-toting mooks is going to hold up for long against a determined attack by a superhero team.

If the PCs confront Rose Red after the fight and demand to know why she killed those school-kids she initially denies it. If they insist that they know she did, she abruptly admits it, but says the PCs aren't authorized to know why. It's a Secret Matter, she explains. American Intelligence knows all about it, and if they haven't seen fit to share the details with the PCs then she won't either.

They will probably try to apprehend her at this stage and they'll probably succeed, if they haven't been too gnashed-up by the gunfight. If they're in real trouble, have Agent Painter show up at the last second and help them out.

Once they attack her, Rose Red never says another word to the PCs. If they take her into custody, she remains silent.

If the PCs play their cards right with the media, they can heal the city's wounds before there's a crackdown on superheroes or riots in the streets. A madwoman killed Donleavy, the three kids and a whole pile of gangsters, for reasons that only she understands. This is exactly what the public needs to hear.

Later, while the PCs aren't present, someone from the British Embassy shows up and takes Rose Red into custody, explaining

that she has diplomatic immunity and must be tried in a British court. Then she disappears.

Agent Wally Painter

PL: 7

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)

Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)

Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus** 9

Defense: 7 (3 if he is caught Flatfooted)

Toughness Save: 7 (3 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 5

Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 5

Skills: Bluff 6 (+9), Gather Information 7 (+10), Knowledge (Civics) 5 (+8), Notice 8 (+11), Profession (Secret Agent) 8 (+11), Search 6 (+9), Sense Motive 6 (+9)

Feats: Assessment, Benefit (Agent of MI-5), Connected, Chokehold, Dodge Focus 4, Improved Disarm, Quick Draw

Equipment: Pistolgrip Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage), Body Armor (Toughness +4)

Generic Irish Gangster

PL: 2

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)

Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 11 (+0)

Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 2 **Defense:** 2

Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2

Reflexes Save: 2 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Bluff 6 (+6), Intimidate 6 (+6), Knowledge (Streetwise) 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 5 (+7), Stealth 4 (+6)

Feats: Improved Block, Startle

Equipment: Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

2) Snowe, Wight and Rose Red

Rose Red is back in town. This time she's ready to die, and believes she has found the right bloodbath to do it in. To make it perfect she's going to need some superheroes to fight, so she'll try a showier approach than usual.

Rose hits three construction sites and a chemical warehouse, stealing explosives from the construction sites and barrels of flammable chemicals from the warehouse. Then she starts calling a local radio talk show and saying ominous things like *“sixteen hours, twenty four minutes*

left.” As though she were counting down. Clearly she intends to blow up something — but what?

As the PCs move to stake out local monuments and Irish pubs, a skinhead named Reggie “Duke of-Puke” Wight shyly approaches them. He sold Rose Red some detonators and then stuck around for a while to help her out—he’s knows she’s White Power from the Internet so he figured he’d help her any way he could. But when he found out what her target was, he changed his mind about helping her. Rose Red intends to blow up and burn down the Snowe School for Disadvantaged Deaf Children, killing as many of the kids inside as possible.

Reggie tells the PCs where Rose Red is holed up (she’s been hiding in a shipping container down at the dock—or in a disused room under a failing, half-deserted mall, if your campaign city doesn’t have a port). He even offers to lead them there. They have about six hours left on the clock, according to Rose Red’s last message.

Reggie doesn’t have room in his Jetta for anyone to ride with him—it’s too full of junk, white supremacist fliers and broken pieces of lumber (and anyway the door on the passenger side won’t open) but they can follow him. Whether or not they agree to accept Reggie’s help, the moment he gets in his crummy little car and starts it up, it explodes.

If the PCs’ have the radio on, Rose Red calls into the talk show at that very moment. *“That’s a nuke for the Duke of Puke”* she says wryly. *“One less Welshman in the world. And I lied. You don’t have six hours. In fact I’m just going over there now.”*

Do the PCs try to intercept her at the docks, or go straight to the Snowe school? Either option has terrible risks.

Be kind. Whichever the PCs choose, they should catch up with her before she sets off the explosives. Don’t let the kids die, it’s too depressing. After they beat Rose Red, the school will have to be evacuated and perhaps there are bombs that will have to be defused. Evacuating a school full of deaf kids poses some interesting challenges.

If the PCs have caught Rose Red, they may want to ask her why she did this. Did someone pay her? Is there a broader conspiracy?

At first she stonewalls, says that she’s an agent of the British Crown, a loyal soldier in the Intelligence Services, and that she does not divulge Official Secrets. Suffice it to say that there were perfectly good reasons for what she did, which she is not at present authorized to divulge. If they ask her again she breaks down and gives them a straight answer. *“It was full of Mexican kids,”* she says wearily *“wasn’t it?”*

This time no one saves her and she vanishes into an Ultramax superhuman containment prison for a very long time. Or at least until the GM decides that she should break out...

Reggie Wight, The Duke of Puke **PL: 3**

Str: 14 (+2) Dex: 14 (+2) Con: 16 (+3) Int: 10 (+0) Wis: 14 (+2) Cha: 12 (+1) Initiative: 2 Attack Bonus: 2 Defense: 2 Toughness Save: 3 Fortitude Save: 3 Reflexes Save: 3 Willpower Save: 3
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Skills: Bluff 6 (+7), Intimidate 8 (+9), Knowledge (Streetwise) 2 (+2), Notice 5 (+7), Stealth 4 (+6)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Chokehold, Improved Grapple, Startle, Taunt

Equipment: Baseball Bat (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage)

The Tallahassee Torch



"Do you think the billions of bacteria under a burning man's fingernails feel terror and agony as their world dies? God, I hope so!"

Real Name: Brandon Michael Weiner
PL: 10

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 11 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 13 (+1)
Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus:** 9
Defense: 9 (4 if he is caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 10 (7 Impervious, 3 without her Force Field) **Fortitude Save:** 7
Reflexes Save: 7 **Willpower Save:** 8

Skills: Bluff 9 (+10), Intimidate 9 (+10), Notice 7 (+8), Search 4 (+5), Stealth 5 (+9)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Contact, Dodge Focus 5, Power Attack, Sneak Attack 2, Startle, Taunt

Powers: Element Control 11 (Fire; Power Feats: Alternate Powers [Blast, Obscure, Stun, Suffocate]), Deflection (All Ranged Attacks) 11, Immunity 5 (heat-based attacks)

Complications: Compulsive liar, desperate to be feared and respected.

Background: A rising star in Florida's supervillain underground, the torch fancies himself an arch-criminal of the classic mold, but he has neither the raw power nor the reputation to back this up. A pompous sadist and a dreadful ham, he's better at thinking up cruel, scary things to say than he is at plotting diabolical schemes. He puts an awful lot of work into sounding like a master villain, but planning major crimes takes more effort than he is prepared to invest. For the moment he works for other criminals and he tells himself that this is just until he proves his worth and pays his dues. He's fooling himself. The truth is that he's far too lazy and undisciplined to do much of anything without some strong outside motivation, and unless this changes he'll be a second-string hireling all his life.

Despite his limitations, the Torch is far from dumb. He has thought long and hard about the nature of evil (although with no particular depth) and he expresses his bad ideas eloquently. Desperate to be frightening, he has become very adept at saying awful things.

It might seem strange that a man with superhuman powers still needs to constantly tell lies about himself in order to seem more threatening. Yet the Tallahassee Torch does. He will tell people that he roasted his parents to death when in fact they live in a retirement community outside of Boca Raton (he often sends them money, which to his exasperation they refuse to spend). He claims to have burnt down an orphanage full of retarded children near Jacksonville, but no such incident ever happened there. This need to be respected and feared motivates everything he does. If people are watching and they don't look scared enough, he's capable of committing just about any atrocity in order to get their attention-roasting babies in their strollers, frying old ladies as they beg for mercy, setting fire to priceless works of art or any other sick thing that pops into his head. If you fight him in private, with no crowd watching, he's far less ruthless and far less brave. With TV Cameras or a large crowd

looking on, he becomes downright maniacal, incapable of retreating or showing fear. Neither the prospect of capture nor the risk of death will hold him back when he gets like this. On his own, he'll do whatever is required to save his skin.

A chronic and compulsive liar, he can't be trusted in the long run, but he's a reliable short-term hireling and isn't prone to stealing from or betraying his bosses. He prefers not to torture people or to hit them while they're down, unless he thinks it will impress someone who is watching. He's no good at ambushes or at stalking victims from a distance. The urge to frighten the target always gets the better of him when he tries. His attitude toward killing varies according to circumstances. Hesitant to take a human life on his own, he's savagely homicidal in front of anyone he wants to impress.

Around a group of teammates, he's likely to go berserk on civilians and wreak a lot of random and unnecessary havoc. If the PCs manage to separate him from the others they'll find that he's suddenly a lot less murderous. He won't be willing to sell out his employer for a bribe, but if the PCs rough him up they'll find that his capacity to withstand fear and pain has its limits, provided no one he admires is watching.

If left to his own devices he would no doubt become bored and get into trouble fairly quickly. Fortunately for him, superhumans are always at a premium in the underworld and someone always seems to have a job to keep him busy. He hates his nickname and would very much prefer to be called "The Holocaust Man", but everyone in organized crime is used to calling him the Tallahassee Torch and he's afraid of offending them.

His powers manifested early in life and his mother taught him to conceal them. They were wicked, evil and unnatural, she said, although she did not believe this herself. The truth is that she feared people would realize that she had once had an affair with a prominent superhero who had these same powers, and that the Torch is his illegitimate son. Pick a superhero from your campaign to be the Torch's father-it won't come up in this adventure but it might in some future

one. He should be an older hero with flame powers, and it would add an extra wrinkle if he had a reputation as a stubborn, self-righteous advocate of "family values". Mrs. Weiner didn't need to worry. Her husband has never figured out the truth.

While he was a confused and troubled adolescent, the family moved from the Miami suburbs to Tallahassee in the Florida panhandle, and his life suddenly got a lot worse. North Florida was a whole other world, kids teased him for having the wrong accent, he had no friends at all and his parents began to fight all the time. He coped by sneaking off into the woods and setting small animals on fire. By his Senior Year in high school he still had no friends, but he had figured out who his father was and he had moved up to burning homeless people. He went to the prom by himself, caused a lot of damage, killed three people and terrorized everyone else. Only a few of the kids present even realized that he went to their school, he had become such a social nonentity.

He never went home again, convinced that the authorities must be looking for him. In fact they weren't, but the Mafia was, and when they caught up with him they offered him the first of many jobs. Working for the Mob felt beneath him, but he decided that it would do for now, until he has a chance to destroy the world or hold a city for ransom like a proper supervillain. He's been doing jobs for them ever since. The Torch's ten-year high school reunion will be coming up soon and he may not be able to resist attending. If he does show up, it will be a night to remember.

Using the Tallahassee Torch in Your Campaign:

A cut-rate villain-for-hire, we've designed the Torch to have a distinctive personality and MO, but to at the same time be as versatile as possible. Depending on how you want to play him, the Torch can be either completely vicious or relatively tame. His horrible bluster gives him a very dark, edgy quality, but the fact that most of it is a pack of lies undercuts this. He can be hired on a short-term basis to perform almost any criminal act, from contract murder to jewel

theft to attacking a superhero stronghold. He can also appear in a team—his need to be liked and impress people makes him a surprisingly good team player in the short run. He could even go on a pointless rampage if he gets bored and you need a rampaging villain.

Although you are most likely to encounter the Torch in Florida, remember that he is an up-and-comer, eager to venture into new markets for heinous crime. You could in fact reasonably meet him on a job almost anywhere in the US—or even overseas (although he'll be a fish out of water there). He primarily works for the Mafia, but they would gladly sub-contract him out to anyone who asks.

Adventures With the Tallahassee Torch: 1) A Speculative Venture

After they've hung him on a meat hook for a while, Paulie Rizzo decides to tell his questioners what he has done with their money. He borrowed a lot of ready cash from his cousins in the South Florida mob, for a speculative venture that he knew they would never approve. But now that he hasn't paid them back on time, he finds himself in a position where he had better explain.

Paulie's grandfather knew the Rat Pack, and the old man was one of the last people on earth who remembered a crazy drug-soaked evening in Miami back in 1961, when a friend of Frank Sinatra's ("Loopy Izzy" Feingold) crashed his airplane while he was running an errand for Frank. The nature of the errand remains unknown, but it almost certainly had something to do with Frank's buddy John F. Kennedy and his efforts to overthrow the Castro regime, because Izzy was carrying a lot of guns and more than one million dollars in cash when his plane went down.

Paulie was almost certain he had figured out the precise spot where the plane must have vanished into the swamp. All he needed was \$75,000 or so to find it and pull it out. Alas, it took him far too long for him to get the equipment together and he spent too much of the ready cash on coke. Soon he was behind on his bills and acting paranoid. Hence the meat hook.

After he explains everything, his cousins discuss the matter. They decide that it's probably too speculative a venture for them to want to finance, so Paulie is better off staying on his hook. They close the doors of the refrigerator truck where they had been conversing with him, and park it by the side of a lonely road. Which is where a Player Character stumbles across it on patrol.

Paulie is nearly frozen solid, but he's still alive, and he tells them everything. If they go to the place in the swamp, they can catch the guys who did this to him—and maybe help themselves to a million dollars, if they feel so inclined. To sweeten the deal, perhaps one of Paulie's cousins is a Mafioso whom the PCs have been chasing after for a while. Or, if the PCs relish conspiracy theories, imply that Loopy Izzy was carrying documents that might shed light on some sinister old government secrets (perhaps even the Kennedy Assassination).

However you suck the PCs into this matter, they are already in trouble—they were spotted pulling Paulie out of the truck, and the Tallahassee Torch has already been assigned to hunt them down. Tailor the subsequent events to how the PCs react. If they keep Paulie alive and try to hide him, then the Torch publically threatens to burn down a retirement home unless they come face him. If they decide not to get involved, he stalks them while they're out on patrol and tries to kill them from ambush. If they decide to go catch Paulie's cousins in the swamp or recover the plane for themselves, the Torch is there to prevent them. How ruthless he's prepared to get with the PCs when they come to grips with him also depends on the needs and style of your campaign. He might find that he's incapable of burning down an old folks' home, or he might do it for kicks even after the PCs show up.

2) Mercutio is Burning

Delton Angler, an old friend of the Torch from his days in South Florida, has made a grave mistake. A screw-up and a delinquent from an early age, in high school he was associated with a skinhead gang

called the Chunder Patrol. He still sees them from time to time, although they've gotten meaner and scarier than he likes now that they're selling crank. Their chief rivals in north-suburban Miami are a Cuban gang called the Sangre 7.

Delton is a used car salesman, and he's gotten involved with a customer named Valeria Guzman. He failed to sell her a really bad Audi, but he did manage to sell her on himself. Alas, her first cousin is Crazy Isidore, one of the leaders of the Sangre 7. The young couple have been getting dirty looks in the mall food court and hang-up calls in the dead of night. Guys who are known associates of the Chunder Patrol are not welcome to date the Sangre 7's women. Delton is getting scared, although Valeria tells him he's being ridiculous—her cousin doesn't care what she does. This does not calm him. Unhappy and scared, he starts calling old friends and pouring out his problems, just to calm his nerves. One of them is the Tallahassee Torch.

The Torch is struck with an uncharacteristic attack of sentimentality and promises to help his old buddy, who hangs up the phone feeling oddly disturbed by the conversation.

Within a week Delton has realized that he's being ridiculous. He's not really a member of the Chunder Patrol and the Sangre 7 don't take this stuff that seriously. Everyone gets the occasional hang-up call. It doesn't mean a thing.

Then somebody burns down Crazy Isidore's trailer. He's not inside, but two of his brothers are. Isidore is stricken with grief and crazy for revenge. Could the Chunder Patrol have done this?

And then someone burns down a trashy arcade that the Chunder Patrol hang out at. Four people die.

As Delton reels from the news, the Tallahassee Torch shows up on his doorstep and announces that he's here to save his old buddy. The Torch takes Delton and Valeria with him on the road, ostensibly to protect them, but mostly so that he can have an audience for the mayhem he has planned.

The PCs learn of an eruption of arson and gang violence in the South Florida

suburbs. It sounds like a supervillain may be involved—perhaps the infamous Tallahassee Torch. If they get involved, they will find a trail of burning havoc across the 'burbs, as the Torch hits every hangout of the Chunder Patrol and the Sangre 7 that Delton and Valeria can point him to.

Very early on, both gangs realize that they're being attacked by the same opponent and they join forces to hunt him down. For their part, this Romeo and Juliet are terrified of their "rescuer", who senses this and bullies them constantly, playing cruel head games with them as he kills their "enemies". It's important to remember that most of the people he's killing in order to keep them safe from the wrath of their rival gangs are either former friends of Delton's, or distant family members of Valeria's. This is horribly traumatic for them to see. Delton has become desperate to please his former friend, while Valeria has grown dazed and detached. The kids aren't even in love anymore—Valeria is disgusted with Delton's craven toadying and he's grown so focused on saving his own skin that he no longer cares very much about her.

When the PCs finally manage to track down the Torch, he will try to use his "friends" as hostages, and may even kill them if the PCs push him too hard.

Generic Member of the Chunder Patrol (use the same stats for members of Sangre 7)

PL: 2

Str: 14 (+2) Dex: 14 (+2) Con: 14 (+2) Int: 10 (+0) Wis: 10 (+0) Cha: 12 (+1) Initiative: 2 Attack Bonus: 2 Defense: 2 Toughness Save: 2 Fortitude Save: 2 Reflexes Save: 2 Willpower Save: 2
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Skills: Bluff 5 (+6), Intimidate 7 (+8), Knowledge (Streetwise) 4 (+4), Notice 5 (+5), Profession (Fast Food Worker or Convenience Store Clerk) 2 (+2), Search 3 (+3)

Feats: Improved Grapple, Startle, Taunt

Equipment: Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage), Machete (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage)

THE AQUANAUT



"Baby, we were made to be together. We both know it, and we both know I'd kill anyone who tried to drag us apart. Including you and including me."

Real Name: Unknown (but uses the name Carter Stromberg)

PL: 11

Str: 36/18 (+13/+4) **Dex:** 14 (+2)
Con: 38/ 18 (+14/+4) **Int:** 14 (+2)
Wis: 10 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 9 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 14 (11 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 14/4
Reflexes Save: 4 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Bluff 5 (+6), Craft (Mechanical) 5 (+7), Intimidate 9 (+10), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 5 (+7), Notice 6 (+6), Stealth 4 (+6)

Feats: Connected, Environmental Adaptation (Water), Minions (his research-ship, the Nereid, has a crew of eight PL 3

sailors, all them of them deeply loyal to the Aquanaut), Rage 2

Powers: Comprehend 1 (Animals; Flaw: can only Comprehend the language of sea creatures), Enhanced Constitution 20, Enhanced Strength 18, Immunity 3 (to Cold, Pressure and Suffocation), Impervious Toughness 11, Super-Strength 5 (Maximum Lift: 100 Tons; Power Feats: Shockwave, Thunderclap), Super-Senses 2 (Darkvision), Swimming 11

Equipment: Headquarters (The Nereid, an oceanographic research ship, Size Gargantuan, Toughness 5, equipped with a state-of-the-art Communications System, an internal Dock where smaller craft can board the vessel, an automatic Fire Prevention System, a fully stocked Infirmary, a Hangar where helicopters can be stored, an Isolated Location [normally the middle of the ocean], Living Space for the Aquanaut and his crew, an oceanographical Laboratory, an independent Power System and a Workshop. It also has ten levels of the superpower "Swimming").

Complications: Chronic obsessive harasser, compulsively stalks women, can't take no for an answer. Won't willingly travel more than 40 miles from a large body of water.

Background: Prince of the ocean deeps, he prowls the sea without any aqualung or protective gear. He is said to know the tongues of the abyss, to speak with the squid and the giant sharks.

Famous for his superhuman abilities, he doesn't use them to either stop or commit crimes. The Aquanaut makes celebrity appearances, demonstrates his powers for the cameras, does endorsements and gives interviews when he isn't doing secret work for the Navy or exploring the ocean's depths.

In person he is an obnoxious bully and a control freak who always has to be the center of attention. He's also a classic obsessive stalker and if he isn't stopped he's going to kill somebody. Probably someone a Player Character loves.

Aggressive and inappropriate toward the opposite sex, incapable of understanding that a woman might not like

him, he never takes no for an answer. He'll get fixated on some female NPC, (probably the non-super-powered sister, wife or girlfriend of a Player Character) and start harassing her, getting meaner, angrier and more threatening as she tries to avoid him.

The Aquanaut won't immediately kill or assault anyone, but once the PCs start to push him things will rapidly spiral out of control. He'll get increasingly upset every time he's thwarted, and his behavior will get more ominous. Once he's been frustrated too many times he'll turn ugly, and become capable of kidnapping or perhaps even murdering the object of his fixation. If he kidnaps her, he'll hold her prisoner on his oceanographic research ship (the "Nereid" and tell his loyal crewmen that she's a terrorist the Navy ordered him to interrogate. If he tries to kill her, it will probably be by drowning.

The authorities will be oddly slow to move against him until things reach their last, most dangerous phase—he is a celebrity, after all, and his contacts in the Navy will pull every string they can for him until he commits a felony. Even then they are likely to claim that the woman he's obsessed with may be an agent of some hostile foreign power, sent here to seduce and destroy the Aquanaut.

If he does somehow convince a woman to go out with him, she will regret it. He is domineering and insanely jealous, and will try to completely control every aspect of her life, picking out her clothes, telling her what she can eat, how to brush her teeth, pick up a phone, put her shoes on, etc. He will also do his best to alienate her friends and family, so that he can be the sole influence in her life. And if she tries to leave him, beware!

The Aquanaut's origins are classified. Player Characters who somehow manage to gain access to the Department of Defense's files will find that in fact the Navy doesn't really know where he came from or what he is. In 1990 he assisted a Navy SEAL team that came under attack by a great white shark while on an operation in the China Sea. They were impressed enough by his abilities that the SEALs came to work with him on an informal basis and

the relationship grew closer over time.

The truth is that he doesn't know his origins himself. He was an orphan, (there were rumors that he was found on a beach as a child) he was always drawn to the sea and he discovered his powers on his own. If there is a large undersea civilization like Atlantis in your campaign then the GM should feel free to work his origin into it. He may even be a lost prince from that distant underwater kingdom, and spend a lot of his time having adventures down there. Or he may have been exiled for being an obsessive stalker.

If there is no such underwater civilization in your campaign, then he's either a mutant, or the son of the horrible Doctor Dagon (see Page 214).

Using the Aquanaut in Your Campaign:

The Aquanaut isn't a supervillain *per se*—he's a much more personal kind of enemy. Introducing him can be tricky. He should encounter the PC and their girlfriend (or wife, sister, friend, etc.) at least once in some kind of social setting before he starts getting fixated. If she's involved in oceanography or marine biology, this will be simple. It will also be easy if she's a member of the press, or involved in documentary filmmaking.

If none of these sound viable, then remember that there is one thing that always draws him back to dry land—the need to make money. He supports the Nereid through a private non-profit foundation and he spends a lot of time soliciting large private contributions to keep its operations running.

Frankly, both the Aquanaut and the Nereid do a lot more sensationalist stuff for the cameras than they do actual serious research. He explores the ocean to get on TV to attract the major donors to support the Nereid Foundation to explore the ocean to get on TV, etc. The Aquanaut can frequently be found at charity events and society balls, talking to rich people and stumping for funds.

If it seems unlikely for the female NPC in question to move in those circles, perhaps she lands a temp job helping out at such an event, or perhaps the Aquanaut

saw her in a restaurant, became infatuated and arranged to have her sent an invitation.

Adventures With the Aquanaut: 1) A Friend in Need

While on another adventure, a male PC gets lost in the Pacific Ocean. The Aquanaut finds him and helps him reach safety aboard the Nereid. The Aquanaut is a long way from his floating base when he finds the PC, and the two of them are going to have to face the perils of the open ocean together for days. They will battle stinging jellyfish, hungry sharks, huge oceanic waves and other dangers until one of the helicopters from the Nereid spots them, after nearly a week together.

Over the course of spending time with the Aquanaut, the PC has heard him complain about women a lot, and can tell that he's obsessed with his ex-girlfriend in an unhealthy way. Once the two of them are safely aboard the Nereid and surrounded by his loyal crew, the Aquanaut demands one favor of the PC in return for all his help. He wants the phone number of this one particular girl whom the PC knows in their secret identity. He sounds like he's half-joking as he asks.

Is he serious? How does he even know that the PC knows her? Come to think of it, how does he know who she is in the first place? Was this all some kind of twisted set-up?

If the PC refuses to give the Aquanaut the phone number, he jokes that in that case he'll have to throw them overboard. If they still don't give it to him, he actually does it (then he calls the Coast Guard, who will fish the PC out of the water after two more harrowing days and nights at sea).

If on the other hand the PC does give him the number, he will act grateful and have the Nereid take them anywhere they want to go. He tries hard to be friendly to them on the trip back. If the PC was interrupted in the middle of a mission, he'll even help them complete it. But as soon as they're back on land, things get weird and ugly. He calls the girl. And calls her, and calls her, and calls her, as his cycle of crazy obsession starts up once again.

The Nereid's Loyal Crew

PL: 3

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 3 **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Climb 4 (+5), Concentration 3 (+4), Craft (Mechanical or Electronic), Drive 6 (+8), Handle Animal 6 (+7), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 3 (+5), Medicine 3 (+4), Notice 5 (+6), Profession (Sailor) 4 (+6), Search 3 (+4), Stealth 2 (+4), Survival 6 (+7), Swimming 8 (+9)

Feats: Defensive Attack, Grappling Finesse, Improved Grapple

Equipment: Riot Baton (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Speargun (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

A Big Mean Shark

PL: 5

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 2 (-4) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 2 (-4)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 5 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 4 **Fortitude Save:** 5
Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 5

Skills: Notice 6 (+8), Stealth 5 (+7), Swim 10 (+15)

Feats: Sneak Attack 2

Powers: Strike 1 (Power Feat: Mighty), Super-Senses 3 (Low-Light Vision, Scent, Tracking)

2) Bad Love and Cold, Deep Water

The object of the Aquanaut's affections drops everything, takes all her money out of the bank, quits her job and flees to New Zealand (or away from new Zealand, if that's where the campaign is set). She begs the PC she knows to go with her.

Whether or not the PC agrees to interrupt his life and run off to New Zealand with her, the Aquanaut senses that she is about to run, and has his contacts in Naval Intelligence find out what flight she's on. He manages to intercept her on the last leg of her journey, on the plane that will take her on the long hop across the Pacific. He is seated in another part of the aircraft, but comes looking for her the moment the plane

is out over deep, cold water.

If the PC has come along, he notices a brief delay before the flight takes off, as one more passenger is hustled aboard at the last second. He can't see who it is. Once the plane is well underway, the Aquanaut comes slinking down the aisle, looking for the woman he loves. He crouches down next to her seat and says *"I'm not angry."*

He's calm at first as he talks to her, but he ignores anyone who tries to speak to him or get past him in the aisle. She won't speak to him, at least initially, but as she begins to silently weep he gets more and more agitated and starts raising his voice. Without looking at him, she quietly begs to be left alone.

He starts loudly sobbing and asks if she has no pity, if she can't see that he's dying at her feet. He pays no attention at all to the male PC, no matter what the Player Character says to him, or to the flight attendants who eventually start telling him to go back to his seat. Nor does he seem to notice the angry passengers who begin to heckle him.

After they fail to get the Aquanaut to return to his seat, the flight attendants bring the copilot back to reason with him. The copilot threatens to turn the plane around and have the police meet them on the tarmac if he refuses to sit down.

The Aquanaut appears not to hear him, and continues to remonstrate with the young lady. He has, however, heard him perfectly well, and when the copilot throws up his hands in disgust and walks back to the cockpit, the Aquanaut suddenly stops talking. He grabs the young woman and drags her, screaming, to the front of the airliner. He will attempt to make the pilots slow the plane down as much as they can without stalling it, and descend to just above the water. He will then leap from the aircraft with his beloved in his arms. He's likely to die and she's almost certain to, but he doesn't care—it's more important that they be together, forever, in the all-embracing sea.

How this scenario works out depends heavily on the point at which the PC physically intervenes. It's going to be

tough to stop him. If they get into a superpowered slugfest in a crowded, fragile airliner at 30,000 feet, a lot of people are likely to die. The PC probably cares about this, but the Aquanaut certainly doesn't. That gives him what is potentially a huge advantage in a fight.

If for some reason the PC didn't accompany the object of the Aquanaut's obsession with, the scenario is simpler, but more dire. After she leaves, they hear on the news that a supervillain is trying to force down a trans-continental flight over the Pacific Ocean. With a sinking sensation they realize what flight that is and who is on board. Can they fly to the rescue and intercept the airliner in time?

3) One Last Shipwreck

Some time after the PCs have finally managed to put the Aquanaut behind bars, the Navy gets in touch. They have a situation. A nuclear submarine has sunk off the coast of Southern California and it's leaking radioactive waste into the water. To make matters even more urgent, they think nearly half the crew may still be alive down there, trapped in the forward compartment. They need the Aquanaut. Even if there are other aquatic heroes out there, none of them have his level of experience with rescues of this type.

The Office of the Navy has been trying to secure a temporary release for him to go rescue the sub. But he wants something in return. He wants a chance to speak with the woman he's obsessed with. The woman the PCs had to rescue from him. He is willing to take on the mission first, he claims to know that time is of the essence, but before he'll go he wants a signed statement from her, swearing that she will come see him in person once the mission is over.

The Navy knows that the PCs have some pull with the young woman in question. Can they get her to sign? She'll be completely safe—the PCs can even be present at the meeting themselves to help ensure her security. In fact, because they're the ones who apprehended him in the first place, the naval authorities would prefer it if they accompanied the Aquanaut

on his mission, just to make sure he doesn't escape. They have no doubt that the PCs are would be properly motivated to return him to custody. Too many other superheroes seem to feel conflicted about whether or not he really belongs in prison.

The young woman will agree to sign the document once she learns how many lives are at stake and that the PCs will be there to protect her the whole time she's in the room with the Aquanaut. She isn't happy about it, though, and as the day draws closer she will begin to have nightmares and anxiety attacks.

Once he has the signed document in hand, the Aquanaut is ready to do his best. The submarine lies on the verge of the continental slope, where the ocean bed drops away into the black depths of the Pacific basin, miles below. It's balanced precariously on a ledge, and could go tumbling off into the crushing depths at any moment. Any rough handling and it could go over the side. The submarine is lying at an odd angle with most of its hatches covered, but the Aquanaut is skilled at handling these kinds of situations and he knows exactly how to get inside the vessel without damaging or dislodging it. The PCs can hear the men inside start to cheer once they realize that the Aquanaut has arrived.

But something even more dangerous than a leaky nuclear reactor lurks out there in the darkness. Upon examination, it becomes clear that the sub did not sink by accident. Someone with tremendous superhuman strength ripped it open and sent it down. It wasn't the

Aquanaut—he was in prison and anyway he's probably not that strong. Who did? Are they still in the vicinity?

The answer, of course, is yes.

Doctor Dagon appears from nowhere and says *"My son, I knew that if I sunk it, they would have to send you. Come away with me to the deep and leave the cruel surface world behind."*

The Aquanaut says nothing, so Doctor Dagon attacks the PCs. The Aquanaut will take their side and when Doctor Dagon sees this, he won't make more than a half-hearted attempt to defeat them.

Why did the Aquanaut help them fight off Doctor Dagon? Because if he went away with him, he would never get to see the love of his life again. He did feel conflicted about it. He doesn't like prison, he could feel the sea calling to him the whole time he was incarcerated, and Doctor Dagon probably could have answered all the questions he's spent his life burning to know (Who am I? Where did I come from?). But of course none of that matters, compared with true love.

The rest of the mission proceeds flawlessly and the PCs get a hero's welcome on the surface. The Aquanaut wearily tells them to enjoy it now—being a hero only lasts until the first time you screw up.

And now for his reward. The moment the girl enters the room with him, ashen-faced and terrified, he will attempt to kill her. If he succeeds, he will then try to kill himself, only to find that he can't.

DOCTOR FRIGHTFUL, MD



"I makes a scrudly chuddly experiment on you, I makes it reeeal good and slow."

Real Name: None

PL: 11

Str: 30/20 (+10/+5) **Dex:** 14 (+2)
Con: 30/20 (+10+5) **Int:** 8 (-1) **Wis:** 8 (-1)
Cha: 14 (+2)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 11
Defense: 8 **Toughness Save:** 10/5
Fortitude Save: 10/5 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Intimidate 7 (+9), Notice 7 (+6),
Profession (Mad Butcher) 5 (+4),
Stealth 6 (+8)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Diehard, Distract
(Linked to Intimidate), Endurance,
Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Grapple,
Startle

Powers: Enhanced Strength 10, Enhanced
Constitution 10, Immunity (Aging, Disease,
Radiation), Super-Senses 3 (Darkvision,
Ultra-Hearing), Transformation 11

(Transforms a narrow group of targets into
a narrow group of results [makes ordinary
people into brain-damaged superhumans,
does not work on anyone who already has
innate superhuman abilities]; Extras:
Continuous [lasts until it is reversed], Flaw:
Limited Power [Only works one time in
three, requires a lengthy, bloody and
disgusting surgical procedure])

Equipment: Headquarters (see below),
Second Headquarters (which he can retreat
to in a dire emergency—it has the same
stats and appalling sanitary conditions as the
first one), Long Cruel Hollow Needles, which
he inserts under his fingernails (eww!)
(Transfer Constitution 10), Rusty Surgical
Tools (Melee Weapons, do from 1-6 Damage

depending on which one he uses)

Headquarters: A grotty underground set of rooms, usually off a subway tunnel or in the basement of an abandoned building, a typical Doctor Frightful Headquarters will be Huge in size, have a Toughness of 8 and the following Features: Concealment, Holding Cells (really just a bunch of fraying, grue-encrusted dentists' chairs, where superhumans sit drugged and swaddled in yards of tape), Infirmary (although you wouldn't want to seek medical treatment there), Laboratory, Workshop, Extra 7 levels of Snare on Holding Cells, to keep "patients" immobilized.

Complications: Crazy irrational weirdo who thinks he's a master criminal, incapable of functioning in normal society.

Drawbacks: Hideous (moderate, very common), Moderate Vulnerability to Dazzle Attacks

Background: He doesn't have a name. Father called him "Frightful" or "My First and Worst Mistake" and kept him chained up in a little room behind the laboratory. He would peek under the crack of the door and watch Father make experiments, and hear the lovely screams and smell the lovely smells. He kept breaking his chain and trying to get out of his little room, which made Father angry and afraid and meant he had to have many beatings and shocks from the awful hurt-stick. He did not like that stick, but he loved Father.

Sometimes when people had been bad, Father would put them in Frightful's little room and he would play with them and make experiments on them himself.

One day bad men in capes with terrible powers came to hurt Father. Frightful snapped his chain and came out of his room and did things to them. The laboratory was ruined, but Frightful and Father escaped and built new labs in many places, mostly in the tunnels under the city, far from the cruel light of the sun. Someday Frightful will climb up there and crush that sun, when he isn't so afraid of it.

After he helped Father with the men in capes, he didn't have to stay in his room much anymore and he helped Father with his experiments and to catch new test

subjects and fight off bad men in capes. It was best of all to do experiments on bad men in capes, Father told him, so they could find out why they had powers. Also it was the most fun.

Frightful did his best to help, but he was clumsy and got mad sometimes and forgot how easy Father's parts could break. After a while Father got to be really scared of him and this made Frightful even more mad.

Father stopped talking or doing experiments and after that he got broken so bad that Frightful couldn't figure out how to fix him. So Frightful decided that he would have to be the Doctor now and make experiments and build laboratories and things. For a while he carried Father around with him to see if he could find a way to fix him, but then Father fell apart and his pieces got lost.

Now Doctor Frightful grabs guys with powers and makes experiments on them whenever he can. Sometimes they hurt him and he has to run away and make a new laboratory, but they've never caught him.

Using Doctor Frightful in Your

Campaign: A brute who thinks he's a master villain, Doctor Frightful is tragic, horrible and macabre. He stalks and snatches unsuspecting superbeings, both hero and villain alike, and subjects them to disgusting, pointless and fatal surgical procedures until they die, get rescued or break loose.

The authorities completely misunderstand what Doctor Frightful is. Feel free to feed your players the following "official story" before they come to grips with him.

Doctor Frightful is widely supposed to be a neurosurgeon of British-Japanese ancestry named Doctor Tetsuo Fearington Blood. Doctor Blood grew up and attended medical school in Tokyo. He received his medical degree some time around 1935. He would be at least ninety years old by now.

Despite all the prejudice he endured over his European heritage and occidental appearance, Doctor Blood was ruthless, determined and smart enough to get

assigned to a secret Japanese medical facility in Manchuria, where he participated in some of the most cruel and depraved experiments ever performed on human beings. Their hapless patients appeared on official records as “logs” so the doctors jokingly called their facility “the Sawmill.” Not one log ever passed out of the Sawmill alive—a record of absolute evil that even the Nazi death-doctors never quite achieved.

To this date Doctor Blood is the only physician to ever have been prosecuted for these crimes. The others went on to prominent positions in medical schools or became the heads of pharmaceutical firms or otherwise prospered. Some of them are still enjoying a comfortable old age in the Tokyo suburbs as we speak.

Doctor Blood's ancestry made him a scapegoat, however, and he was called to account for his crimes before an American military tribunal. Instead he vanished, taking his secrets with him (or perhaps was spirited away by unscrupulous elements within the War Department, depending on how paranoid a campaign you are running).

Whatever happened, in 1961 he somehow turned up inside the United States, carrying on his dreadful experiments in a secret lab beneath the streets of your campaign's home city! Over the next ten years he fought superheroes from time to time, and killed or lobotomized a few. He also made some apparent breakthroughs in the understanding of parahuman neurophysiology, although the details remain unclear.

For a while he vanished altogether, and when he turned up again in the early 1970s he seemed to have undergone some kind of horrible transformation (although in fact he had been replaced by his hulking, freakish lab assistant). He wanted to be called “Doctor Frightful” now, presumably because of his hideous appearance, and he was worse than ever.

The GM should remember that no one knows the true story, so sinister organizations, the mob and possibly even rogue elements of the US intelligence community may still come to seek the Doctor's expertise and be willing to bargain with him, despite the fact that he's now

effectively nothing but a psychotic, unpredictable torture-killer. He's perfectly willing to tell the PCs the truth about himself if they fall into his clutches.

While he's crazy and incapable of dealing with the world, he did participate in a lot of Doctor Blood's experimental work, and at the GM's discretion he may still know a few techniques by rote, or still have a supply of a miracle serum (or some such substance) that actually does have an effect on parahuman abilities.

Doctor Frightful also has a secret vice. He likes to drain the juices from parahumans directly into his own tissue, with a set of hollow needles that he inserts under his own fingernails. He claims that this gives him their powers, but of course it doesn't. Instead it gives him sick thrills and the occasional STD. Some people think this habit is his least appealing trait, others say it's not that easy to choose one.

Doctor Frightful is too addled to really serve as anyone's nemesis, but if somebody hurts him he will remember it and if he encounters them again he will try to punish them for it. Although he's not a long-term enemy, he does have a bad way of getting obsessed with one or another parahuman, stalking them relentlessly until he finds a chance to snatch them.

His “laboratories” are generally located underground (or sometimes in an abandoned building if he can't find a suitable place location beneath the streets). None of them look like the kind of place you'd want to have surgery.

Adventures With Doctor Frightful: 1) Pookie Went Down to Frightful-Town

Fleeing from the bad men in capes and the terrible light of the sun, Dr. Frightful stumbles onto one of his master's old lairs, which still holds the tools, drugs and instructions for a parahuman enhancement technique that actually works. Well, it almost works, anyway. The technique will give subjects both psychic powers and horrible brain injuries, if it doesn't kill them outright. The sickeningly unsanitary conditions in the operating theater and Dr. Frightful's sloppy surgical technique don't make things any better.

Nonetheless, once he starts snatching late-night riders off of subway platforms and subjecting them to the process, enough of them live to cause havoc.

A derelict floats up into the air above a rush-hour crowd and starts mentally commanding people to kiss his shoes. His head is all raw and bloody from some kind of crude surgery. After a few minutes of having his feet kissed, he falls to the ground and expires from a brain hemorrhage.

A suburban family man named Thad Thaler vanishes for a few days, and then tries to rob a bank, screaming inarticulately about the Lord Jesus putting radioactive sand in his brain so that he could receive secret messages from Congress. Mr. Thaler is carrying a shotgun that he's stolen from a sporting goods store, but he also has telepathy, pyrokinesis and a kind of telekinetic force field. He's twitching and salivating uncontrollably and can't perform any fine motor skills with the left side of his body. All the hair has been (crudely) shaved of the back third of his head, and there are sloppy, badly placed sutures and medical staples across a number of recent wounds on his cranium.

A cleaning lady named Elvira Querioz disappears from a subway platform at two in the morning. Some other bleary-eyed late night riders standing on the platform heard her scream, and someone on a passing train swears they saw a terrible, gigantic shape drag her off into the tunnels.

A week later she climbs out of a manhole, bald and bleeding, and crawls down the street, moaning softly. Everything she looks at bursts into flames (PL 3 flame attack). Poor Mrs. Querioz is incapable of understanding human speech, or of doing much else apart from crawling in one direction and setting things on fire.

At the GM's discretion other such incidents may happen as well. The PCs should quickly figure out that Dr. Frightful is back in town. But they're not the only ones.

A minor organized crime boss named Dandy Joe Horkin decides that he would very much like to have superpowers. Dandy Joe is a crazy, scrawny little manic-

depressive with a reputation for taking insane gambles. He and his crew have suffered some reverses at the hands of his arch-rival, Little Junior Gorganzua, and he thinks that becoming a supervillain may be the trick they need to turn everything around. As far as Dandy Joe knows, Dr. Frightful is an evil genius who knows how to give guys superhuman powers, so all he has to do is to make contact with the man and pay him enough money and his fortunes are sure to change (boy, are they ever!). Alas, Dandy Joe's chief henchman Pookie (a gigantic bald-headed ex-biker with a big black beard and a lot of tattoos of cute furry animals) is annoyed with him and tells Little Junior all about the plan.

Little Junior is a fat, sweaty, conniving ball of lard, better suited to planning scams than to getting in street fights, and it seems to him that it might not be wise to directly confront an arch-villain like Dr. Frightful. So instead he tips off the PCs. However, once he figures out that Dandy Joe will probably die from the treatment Dr. Frightful is going to give him, he sends Pookie down into the sewers and has him warn the good doctor that the PCs are coming.

2) Highway to Horror

Brain-damaged lunatics start appearing along Interstate 80 (or some other long and lonely interstate highway, closer to the Player Characters' home city). From California to the Midwest, they turn up stumbling down the side of the road, or stagger into isolated rest stops in the middle of the night. Some of them are violent and a few have minor psychic abilities. All of them have had their brains sloppily mutilated by someone with a lot more enthusiasm than surgical skill. This sounds like the work of Doctor Frightful, but how could he have done it? The victims were hundreds of miles apart.

Because these incidents have happened over such a wide stretch of territory, in so many different jurisdictions, the police haven't yet figured out that they're related. Perhaps the PCs find out about it while study news reports for traces of interstate crime. Or perhaps the PCs are

traveling the Interstate themselves, when they have a weird encounter at midnight.

On a lonely stretch of road, with nothing but flat empty fields around them, their headlights wash over a figure stumbling in circles on the median strip. He's clearly hurt. If they pull over to help him he continues to walk in a circle. If they try to speak to him he will whimper faintly, but he isn't really capable of speech anymore. He looks like a skinny college student in a red flannel shirt (although he was in fact an itinerant construction worker). At second glance, his shirt isn't red, it's covered in blood. He will try to bite anyone who stops him from walking in circles, but he should be easy enough for a group of superheroes to restrain. He's bleeding pretty badly from a set of poorly sutured surgical incisions on his head, and if he doesn't get to a hospital within a few hours, he's going to die. He'll never recover his wits in any case.

Days later, as the PCs relax at a rest stop in the mountains (or the desert, or some other inhospitable place) a fat naked man comes running crookedly up the exit. Giggling like a child, he will stand in front of the bathrooms and brandish a piece of broken glass at anyone who comes close. He's a telekinetic (PL 3) and will use his power to fling bits of debris at anyone who approaches him, giggling louder and more crazily all the time. This unwelcome stranger has some sort of fresh surgical wounds on his bare scalp, although he isn't bleeding as badly as the last victim was. He'll live a few days in custody, giggling and lashing out at anyone who gets close. With a cranial X-Ray or an autopsy, it becomes clear that someone performed brain surgery on him, and left a rusty clamp inside his head.

What's going on here? That fat naked guy didn't run all the way from town—there aren't any towns close enough. Perhaps the PCs have a research contact they can call, who tells them that isolated incidents like this have been happening for weeks, spread out over more than a thousand miles. Or perhaps they have more evil nocturnal encounters (a brain-damaged, uncontrollably shaking young woman walks

into a truck stop and tries to set herself and the gas pumps on fire, the PCs find a corpse with recent cranial injuries slumped in a public restroom, etc.)

In fact, a deadly motorhome prowls the Interstate by night, snatching weary travelers for Dr. Frightful. This Winnebago of doom is driven by Otis Slotterback, a fat old man with an eerie smile, and his equally fat wife Grace, who wears huge tasteless hats to conceal the fact that she has no hair.

The Slotterbacks are desperate, underneath their constant idiotic smiles. Grace is dying of cancer. First she was dying slowly, now she's dying fast. While Dr. Frightful is clearly evil, he's also known to be a scientific genius, and Grace and Otis are more than willing to play along for a chance at a cure.

Otis' horrible glue-sniffing son Eustis travels with them and helps out with subduing victims, along with his biker friends Howie Turpin and Petey Mulvane. The three of them either ride in the back of the motorhome or follow it on their bikes. They're in this for kicks—Eustis doesn't much care whether his mom lives or dies. For her part Grace disapproves of Howie and Petey, and keeps telling Eustis that they'll get him into trouble one of these days (although it's frankly hard to see how he could ever be in more trouble than he's in now).

Sometimes Dr. Frightful rides in the back of the motorhome and performs field surgery on victims while they rumble down the highway, but for the most part he lurks in his secret lair and lets the Slotterbacks bring fresh meat to him. He works out of a deserted farm, off a country road about thirty miles from an Interstate exit in west Kansas. It will be extremely hard to find without the help of someone who already knows where it is. There are a lot of old crumbling buildings on the farm, but the cinderblock milking house is the only one that shows signs of recent use. All the windows have been bricked up to keep out the light of the hateful sun. Here is Doctor Frightful's main operating theater.

Once Otis Slotterback realizes that Doctor Frightful is a madman and there's no hope for Grace, he will either go insane,

betray the Doctor to the Player Characters, or both.

Eustis Slotterback

PL: 3

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 10 (+0)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 6 **Attack Bonus:** 3
Defense: 3 (2 if he is caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 3 (0 if caught Flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 2 **Reflexes Save:** 2
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Bluff 6 (+8), Drive 5 (+7), Notice 4 (+6), Search 5 (+7)

Feats: Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 1, Improved Initiative

Equipment: Nunchucks (Melee Weapon, 2 damage), Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

Complications: Vicious psychopath. Kills for laughs. Always smiles.

Howie Turpin

PL: 3

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 2
Attack Bonus: 3 **Defense:** 3 **Toughness Save:** 3 (2 without his leather jacket)
Fortitude Save: 3
Reflexes Save: 2
Willpower Save: 2

Skills: Craft (Mechanical) 4 (+4), Drive 3 (+5), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 5 (+5), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 4 (+6)

Feats: Equipment 2 (10 pts) Move-By Action, Precise Shot, Quick Draw

Equipment: Heavy Leather Jacket (3pts of Protection), Motorcycle (Vehicle; Size: Medium; Strength 15; Speed 5; Defense 10; Toughness: 8), Bayonet (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

Complications: Sick freak. Kills for kicks. Almost never speaks.

Petey Mulvane

PL: 4

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 2
Attack Bonus: 4 **Defense:** 4 **Toughness Save:** 4 (3 without his leather jacket)
Fortitude Save: 4
Reflexes Save: 3
Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Bluff 3 (+5), Craft (Mechanical) 4 (+4), Drive 5 (+7), Intimidate 3 (+5), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 5 (+5), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 5 (+7)

Feats: Chokehold, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Move-By Action

Equipment: Heavy Leather Jacket (4pts of Protection), Motorcycle (Vehicle; Size: Medium; Strength 15; Speed 5; Defense 10; Toughness: 8), Motorcycle Chain (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage)

Complications: Twisted weirdo. Kills for thrills. Talks too much.

CHAPTER 3: MAJOR THREATS

WARPATH



"Don't cross me on this one...if you do, there's nowhere I can't hunt you down."

Real Name: John Bright-Path

PL: 12

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 24/18 (+7/+4)

Con: 18 (+4) **Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3)

Cha: 16 (+3) **Initiative:** 11

Attack Bonus: 12 **Defense:** 12

Toughness Save: 12 (9 Flatfooted, 7 Without Armor, 4 Without Armor or Dodge Bonus)

Fortitude Save: 7 **Reflexes Save:** 9

Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+15), Bluff 5 (+8), Climb 8 (+12), Escape Artist 3 (+10), Gather Information 5 (+8), Intimidate 6 (+9), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 6 (+8), Knowledge (Streetwise) 4 (+6), Language (Lakota), Notice 14 (+17), Ride 5 (+12), Search 11 (+15), Sense Motive 5 (+8), Stealth 10 (+17), Survival 12 (+15)

Feats: Assessment, Critical Strike, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment (5pts worth), Evasion, Favored Opponent (Supernatural Monsters), Improved Critical (With Knife), Improved Initiative, Interpose, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Seize Initiative, Set-Up, Sneak Attack, Takedown Attack, Tracking, Ultimate Effort

Equipment: Device (Magic Knife, easy to lose, confers the following powers: Mind Shield 9, Strike 8 [Extras: Dimensional, Penetrating; Power Feats: Affects Insubstantial Targets, Mighty], Super-Senses 2 [Detect Use of Psychic Powers, Low-Light Vision]), Enhanced Dexterity 6, Mind Reading 9 (Flaws: Limited [Only reveals the subject's emotions and overall personality], Sense-Dependant [must see the target to read them]), Speed 3 (Maximum Speed of 50 mph), Super-Movement (Dimensional) 2 (Mystic Dimensions), Super-Senses 6 (Awareness of Magic, Dimensional Vision [reveals spirits], Tracking [Visual] 3 [can move all-out while Tracking]) Device (Armored Costume, 5 Protection)

Complications: Won't hurt innocent bystanders, drinks too much.

Background: The birth of John Bright-Path 48 years ago had been awaited by his people for generations. He was the product of ages of selective breeding, of arranged bloodlines and earth-rituals all destined to produce the champion that would be needed in the closing decades of what was referred to as the 20th century. The ancient prophecies predicted that this would be the time of the Skin Changers, cunning spirits from the Shadow-Blighted Lands who would spread like a plague among mankind, corrupting all they touched. Young John was taught these prophecies from an early age. He was also taught to harness the genetic gifts with which he had been blessed. By age 10 he could out-run and out-hunt the strongest men of his tribe. By 15 he had learned to use his mystic sight to perceive the auras of all living beings, mortal or spirit. By 20 he could pursue prey no matter what the obstacle, by briefly stepping outside the realm of man. And at 23, John proved his worth as the chosen champion, by hunting down and slaying a great grey Astral Wolf, a fearsome predator of the Spirit Realm. He took the beast's heart and claimed one of its fangs as his own, fashioning it into a spirit-knife that would seek out any foe's weakest spot. Adopting a brightly colored skin-tight costume that combined Native American elements with standard super-hero motifs, John adopted the title of Spirit Warrior.

Spirit Warrior was now ready for his predestined role. He would serve as humanity's Great Hunter, ferreting out the most insidious foes the world had ever faced. As the ancient tales bade, he would fight alone at first, but eventually come to lead a band of heroes against the demon Skin Changers. The battle would last decades, perhaps half his lifetime, but it would be won. He would be ready...except that as events unfolded, it turned out he was barely needed. It seems the old prophecies had not accounted for nearly all-powerful alien overmen, or for ancient reincarnated Egyptian sorcerers, or even for government enhanced mutant psychic soldiers. Other heroes detected the presence of the Skin Changers before Spirit

Warrior even had time to react. The battle lasted months, not decades. And in the end, he was just one more garish costume among many, not a leader, not a champion, just another grunt. His birthright was a hollow promise.

After the threat of the Skin Changers was ended, John tried to find a new role for himself. He joined a Southwestern United States based super-team called the Advance that he had fought alongside. But John had been raised to be a leader, not a follower, and clashed too often with the team leader Zen Ken and second-in-command Armistice; he was eventually asked to leave—politely but firmly. He tried to become a solo hero, protecting Native American interests against greedy corporations and corrupt elder tribesmen, but found himself ill-equipped. He was a hunter, not a detective, and was too trusting and naïve about people—he was by nature suited to battling demons, not men. His “ordinary” life fared just as poorly, as he found little success in either education or work. Depressed and aimless, John turned increasingly to drink, which would ultimately prove his downfall.

Drifting and low on both money and self-esteem, John allowed himself to be recruited into the ranks of a radical faction of the Indian Rights movement. His new “friends” assured him that their protest at the city's Columbus Day event would be a peaceful one, and that his presence there was only needed to keep the local authorities from denying them their right to assemble. Spirit Warrior showed up that morning semi-inebriated but ready to play his part in the march. He figured he was just there for “show”, and everything would be all right. He couldn't have been more wrong. The protesters did everything possible to antagonize the police and the Columbus Day celebrators, and the march quickly turned violent. Bats, bricks, and tire irons came into play, as tear gas and night sticks flew. Spirit Warrior tried to hold back as much as possible while defending his “fellow Indians”, but things quickly turned ugly. He put one police officer through a squad car windshield and broke the arm of another, before the local super-hero Brigade

showed up; John tried to keep his cool, but when the heavily armed hero drew blood, Spirit Warrior erupted in a haze of alcohol fueled violence, and his spirit knife found Brigade's heart.

John surrendered to the authorities after he sobered up, and pleaded no contest to charges of assault and manslaughter. He was sentenced to the Federal Maximum Security Institute for Superhuman Offenders in Nevada. Prison was especially rough for a minority super-hero in prison, and John spent much of his time in isolation. He was finally paroled for good behavior after ten years. With no other options, he returned in disgrace to the reservation where he was born. He was stunned to be welcomed home with open arms as a favorite son, a hero who had made a few mistakes. His tribe had fared well in his absence, as newly erected casinos and resorts brought tourists and wealth. He immediately found a good-paying job in casino security—having an infamous meta-human on the payroll effectively quelled would-be thieves and troublemakers. He met and married Lily Two-Trees, a hostess at the casino and part-time teacher at the reservation school. They had a daughter Shania soon after they married. All was well—until Shania's 13th birthday.

When John had turned 13, he fully came into his superhuman prowess. When his daughter reached the same age, she was stricken with an unexplainable wasting disease. Neither western doctors nor the tribe's medicine men could help; even the origin of the disease defied explanation—to everyone but John's grandfather. His grandfather explained that this was no natural disease. John's birth had been carefully orchestrated, but John had married for love, and his little girl's genetic heritage was not strong enough for the mystic energies that coursed through her frame.

John was helpless, and his wife nearly mad with grief. Lily suffered a stroke brought on by the stress of watching her daughter slipping away, and John descended into alcoholism again.

One evening, when John had made the decision to drink himself to death, an infamous arch-villain appeared (choose one

from your campaign), offering life for his wife and daughter and redemption for his soul. He needed some muscle for a job, and John seemed like the ideal candidate. By way of payment, he would help Shania and Lilly. He said no one would get hurt.

John saw no choice but to trust the enigmatic figure before him. He would do it—but not as Spirit Warrior. He wouldn't dishonor the heritage that should have been his; instead he would adopt the guise of Warpath, a cynical, bitter man fighting for no cause but that his own. He would play the role of the mercenary villain, an "angry, America-hating Indian" to mask the shame he felt at his second fall from grace. He secretly hopes to find another way to make things right and be a hero again.

Using Warpath in Your Campaign:

Warpath is a newly born supervillain, whose tragic life has lately led him down the path of crime. The PCs won't have heard of him under his Warpath identity, but he's already incredibly seasoned and tough. He's a master villain's henchman, with a twist. PCs who learn the truth of his story may feel torn between defeating him and helping him themselves. Which presents you with two ways to play Warpath—as a master villain's henchman with an interesting back-story, or as someone the PCs need to get out from under a master villain's thumb. We haven't defined which master villain made him the offer, or what dastardly scheme they've enlisted him in, to give you more flexibility in how you'd like to use him. Nor have we decided whether or not the offer to help his wife and daughter is sincere.

The PCs' actions are likely to have a direct effect on Warpath's evolution as a character. If they throw him back in jail and his wife or his daughter die while he is inside, he will become their implacable foe, and he'll get a lot more savage. If they help him in the right way, he could become a hero again. It's always good to allow your PCs to have a real effect on your game-world. It lets them know that their actions matter.

A basically honorable opponent, Warpath wouldn't hurt an innocent bystander or harm a child, but that doesn't

mean he fights fair. A careful tactician, he gives himself every advantage in a fight, and that includes hitting people from behind, from ambush, or striking an opponent after they've already fallen down. If he gets desperate enough he may even take hostages, although he would never actually hurt them. He is loyal to his employer, but could easily turn on him if he is asked to do something despicable or if he comes to doubt that his boss can really help his wife and child.

Warpath would sacrifice his life in a heartbeat if he thought it would save his daughter. He might be willing to sacrifice a few other lives, too. His little girl and ailing wife are really all he cares about.

Adventures With Warpath: **1) A Frightful Connundrum**

This scenario modifies the back-story a little. In this version, Warpath was approached, not by a master villain, but by the villain's associate—a dapper little Englishman who calls himself Mr. Trent.

Mr. Trent is a former operative of MI-6, now disgraced and expelled for selling weapons to the leaders of a failed coup in Botswana. He has taken some of Her Majesty's Government's files on American superheroes with him into private practice. This is how he was able to find John Bright-Path. Mr. Trent is down on his luck at the moment and is trying to put together a supervillain caper that will make him enough money to retire, or at least to stay in business as a hired fixer.

Unfortunately, his current employer is Doctor Frightful (See Page 50). There is a small coterie of sick, crank-eating bikers who run errands for the Doctor at his new lab (somewhere under the streets of your campaign city) and they hired Mr. Trent on retainer to come up with evil schemes for them, and to lend the operation a touch of class.

Mr. Trent, to his credit, has never directly met Dr. Frightful and he isn't aware that the man is a maniacal butcher who won't really be able to help Warpath's wife or daughter. He wants the gang to assault a heavily guarded organ storage facility at a hospital outside of town and then sell the

organs to a black-market source he knows in Amsterdam. The beauty of this scheme is that Dr. Frightful already has lots of spare organs that he's harvested in his "experiments" and they can use the heist as cover to sell these organs to the black market as well, without anyone in the network asking awkward questions about where they came from (organs that have been harvested from unwilling victims in basement labs under unsanitary conditions fetch a much lower price than organs you've stolen from a nice, clean hospital).

They clearly don't have the muscle to pull this off by themselves, so Mr. Trent is looking for supervillains who might be willing to work for no money up front. Warpath looked ideal. The only other villain he could interest was the Tallahassee Torch (see his description on Page 41). The Torch is an irresponsible psychopath, but he admires Warpath hugely and is doing his best to be a good team player and not kill people wantonly.

The PCs are drawn into this matter when Warpath, the Torch and a gang of scraggly crank-fiends attack the wrong hospital. It's a common mistake—this place has the same name as the hospital where the transplant organs are stored and a lot of people mix the two up. It won't take the PCs long after the battle to figure out what the real target was. If the supervillains get away, there might still be time to stop them at the real target.

If at any point they capture Warpath, he explains his motives to them. Then one of the captured bikers admits that the guy they work for is the infamous Doctor Frightful. This terrible news. Mr. Trent has already gone to pick up Shania and Lilly, and deliver them to Dr. Frightful to be "cured."

When Warpath learns the truth he becomes desperate to escape and go rescue his wife and daughter before they go under the Doctor's knife. Will the PCs stop him or help him? It would certainly be good to have a tough guy like Warpath at their back when they face the evil Doctor Frightful on his home turf.

If the PCs fail to capture Warpath then he figures out the truth for himself

shortly after the second raid, and he will show up at Doctor Frightful's lair to rescue his wife and daughter at the very same moment the PCs are kicking down the door, turning the fight into a three-way battle.

2) Purgatory's Other Promise

This scenario is a variation on Plain Brown Wrapper Games' published adventure "The Promise of Purgatory", with a different objective and many of that mammoth scenario's subplots and complications filed off (go buy a copy of the other adventure anyway—it's great!)

In this version of Warpath's tragic tale, the arch-villain who approached him was none other than the infamous Professor Purgatory (see Page 70), a forgotten villain from the Golden Age who fancies himself an angel and has dreams of becoming a god. The Professor claims to be a good man, here to redeem the world from its wickedness so that he can return to the heavenly kingdom. He is in fact a sadistic maniac with an insane lust to punish sinners for their wickedness. But Warpath doesn't realize this in time. Drawn in by the Professor's amazing personal magnetism, desperate to believe there might be hope for his wife and daughter, Warpath has become his willing minion.

The Professor sends him on a mission to find a device that can redeem this fallen world. He doesn't tell him that it will save the world by blowing it to smithereens. Warpath descends into a defunct American military research complex under the Rockies, looking for a small but unbelievably lethal weapon called the Thanatic Projector. It isn't there. But the complex's old defense systems aren't completely dead, and they send a long-forgotten warning to the Pentagon. Someone knows about the Thanatic Projector. The military contacts the PCs and asks them to deal with this matter.

Warpath's next target will probably be another defunct storage facility, this one in a salt mine under the most desolate part of the Nevada desert. The Thanatic Projector is down there. It's about the size of a baseball and it's capable of killing every living thing on Earth. Can the Player

Characters stop Warpath in time?

In fact, it may not be as simple as doing this. If the PCs confront Warpath in the facility's crumbling subterranean corridors and explain to him what he's actually here to find, he'll be willing to listen to them. But the Professor is watching him closely and if Warpath either loses the fight or betrays him, he will appear in person to take possession of the Projector. If he gets away he'll drag it back to his lair, a domed garden on a burnt-out and uninhabitable parallel world. Shania and Lilly are both there—the Professor has made good on his promise to restore them both. Shania has become completely ensnared by his charm and believes his claims to be an angel. If Warpath ever finds this out, he will be strongly tempted to switch sides again, let the world go to Hell, and live in Purgatory's garden with his wife and daughter forever.

Warpath isn't sure how to pursue the Professor back to his headquarters, but he may not have to figure it out. For very shortly the cross-time police officer known as Double Zed (see her description on Page 65) appears to both Warpath and the PCs, and offers to help them find and retrieve the Thanatic Projector from its current possessor. She doesn't tell them that she wants to use it to destroy the world herself. At least not at first. If she manages to help them defeat Professor Purgatory, she'll thank them for their assistance and then explain what she needs the projector for.

As an added wrinkle, perhaps the supervillain team known as the Legion of the Damned (you can find out all about them on Page 175) finds out that someone is messing around with the Thanatic Projector. If so, they'll be waiting for the PCs, Double Zed, Warpath and the Professor as soon as they reappear in our world. No one blows up the Earth on their watch—their investors would never approve! A three or four-way battle no doubt ensues.

And to add one last twist, the Thanatic Projector doesn't actually work.

HAMMER OF JUSTICE



"What kind of sewer do we live in, where Crime walks free, but Justice must go masked? Take last night. I saw some pretty suspicious looking characters hanging around behind your shop—good thing I was there to scare 'em off. A place like this could get broken into real easy. Know what I'm saying?"

Real Name: Charles "Big Chuck" O'Ryan
PL: 13

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)

Initiative: 12 **Attack Bonus:** 17

Defense: 15

Toughness Save: 12 (10 without body armor, 4 if caught unarmored and Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 9

Reflexes Save: 15 **Willpower Save:** 15

Skills: Acrobatics 10 (+14), Bluff 10 (+13), Gather Information 8 (+11), Intimidate 12 (+15), Investigate 3 (+4), Knowledge (Civics) 8 (+9), Notice 11 (+14), Profession (cop) 5 (+6), Stealth 10 (+14)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Assessment, Chokehold, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 6, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative 2, Improved Pin, Improved Sunder, Instant Up, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Redirect, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Startle, Sneak Attack, Taunt, Toughness, Tracking

Powers: Device (Body Armor; Hard to Lose; 2 pts Impervious Protection)

Equipment: Badge-Shaped Throwing Blades (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage) Billy Club (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage; Extra: Mighty), Comlink (Radio Reception, 1 mile radius), Flash-Bang Pellets (Dazzle 3, Visual and Auditory, 15 foot burst), Handcuffs, Lock-Release Gun, Night Vision Goggles (Super-Senses: Darkvision), Smoke Bombs (Obscure 4, Visual, 20 Foot Radius)

Complications: Will never rat on a cop or the mob.

Background: Originally known as the Blue Shield, and then later the Shield of Justice, he has never actually carried a shield, but then again he's never carried a hammer either. Everyone is much too afraid of him to ask why.

He's a one-man protection racket, who cloaks his crimes in the cape of justice. Most people aren't aware that he extorts money from the folks he "protects." Even most superheroes aren't aware of the depth of his corruption, since they rarely come into contact with him.

One of the city's oldest and most respected crime-fighters, he restricts his regular patrols to one small set of run down working class Italian and Eastern European neighborhoods. A rough, tough, take-no-prisoners kind of vigilante, he attracts a

certain amount of controversy for his uncompromising attitude to crime. He has no tolerance for criminal behavior, he's unimpressed by arguments about rehabilitation and bad childhoods. He's not afraid to torture or terrorize information out of a suspect. In fact he's not afraid to beat a confession out of them, if that's the only way to get one. When you become a criminal, you step outside the rules and he can do what he likes to you. Unless of course you're a made guy. The Hammer of Justice has worked hand-in-glove with the local Mafiosi for decades. He does enforcement work for them when they ask, coming down hard on their competitors and keeping their streets free of petty crime. He gives them a share of the protection money he collects from frightened business owners and just occasionally he rubs someone out for them.

He sees no contradiction in any of this. The Mafia maintains order and helps keep the blacks out of the neighborhood. The Hammer of Justice devotes a fair amount of his own efforts toward chasing out black families when they try to move in, but he can't be everywhere at once.

In his secret identity he is Officer Charles "Big Chuck" O'Ryan, a highly decorated cop with a reputation for bravery. A bluff, friendly giant of a man, he has an unsavory history of brutalizing black and Hispanic suspects in his custody. Just about everyone on the force knows or suspects that Big Chuck is dirty. But he's so charming and personable that they all like him anyway.

He used to collect protection money from his squad car. Then they cleaned up the police force, so he has to put on a mask and do it by night. This annoys him. His father was a cop and he did things the old fashioned way (beating suspects, taking bribes and extorting money from shopkeepers). His grandfather was a cop and he did things the old-fashioned way. It was good enough for them—why isn't it good enough for him? Has the world gone crazy?

Using the Hammer of Justice in Your Campaign: The Hammer of Justice is

meant to be a recurrent, long-term foe. Ideally the PCs should dislike but respect him at first, until they slowly grow to understand the depth of his corruption.

Whenever they first encounter him, he acts skeptical and threatening, accusing the PCs of being soft and of not understanding the real war on crime. He speaks in arrogant clichés and acts abusive, but a lot of Player Characters may actually fall for his act (particularly if they're fans of Frank Miller's work). This will make them hate him all the more as they slowly uncover his hypocrisy.

For his part, he'd be only too happy to be their nemesis. Big Chuck is a friendly, fun-loving guy on the surface, but underneath he's extremely vindictive and vengeful. A crafty and patient man, he can wait a long time to take revenge on someone who has slighted him, but everyone pays eventually. He's a bad enemy to have, and for a guy without any superpowers, he's a surprisingly dangerous foe. He fights dirty, he hits targets by surprise and he knows when to retreat. Honed by years of constant combat and training, his physical capabilities are second to none.

Despite all of his tedious, hectoring talk about what repulsive scum lawbreakers are, he won't hesitate to endanger innocents or take hostages if he thinks it will improve his odds of winning. Yet he doesn't kill casually or wantonly. He's much too calculating to lose control of his temper like that. In the event that he accidentally kills a bystander, he plants a gun on their body and presto! Instant thug.

Adventures With the Hammer of Justice: 1) A Fistful of Justice

The PCs learn that some kind of major drug transaction is about to take place on a grubby basketball court at midnight, deep inside the Hammer of Justice's turf. The Mafia resents not being let in on the deal, and has fed the PCs the tip to break things up. They would have sent the Hammer of Justice, but he has something important to do in his secret identity tonight (Internal Affairs is grilling him yet again).

Unexpectedly, he gets out early and hastens to the scene. He runs into the PCs en route and decides they may mess up everything. He tries to warn them away, asking if they think they're tough enough to keep up with him, telling them they're not serious about fighting crime and so forth. This kind of bullying is unlikely to scare the PCs off, so when they refuse to turn tail he reluctantly follows them to the basketball court.

When everyone reaches the location, they find a Hispanic dealer named Too Sweet buying a huge bale of pot from some Irish kids who have clearly seen too many rap videos. Too Sweet has brought his girlfriend and three of her children to the meet, as well as his crazy cousins Enrique and Cesar, who are packing heat. The mood is casual and relaxed—both sides know and like each other.

When the superheroes swoop down on the group, Enrique and Cesar open fire wildly, the Irish hoodlums attempt to surrender (they know better than to try and resist the Hammer of Justice) and the children run for cover. The Hammer of Justice is extremely brutal in his tactics, knocking the teeth out of guys who are trying to surrender and kicking them after they go down. He focuses on targets who are either helpless or trying not to resist him, leaving Too Sweet's cousins to the PCs. It seems to really offend the Hammer of Justice that Irish kids would dress up in hip-hop clothes, and he makes some very un-PC remarks about this as he beats them into bloody, trembling lumps.

During the chaos of the fight, the Hammer of Justice accidentally kills Too Sweet's girlfriend's thirteen year old son, and in plain view of the PCs he plants a gun on the kid. *"So they get the story straight"* he explains.

If the PCs protest, he says that even though this kid wasn't guilty of any crime tonight, he is surely guilty of who-knows-what else. If he senses any resistance or ambivalence on their part, he announces that he can see which side they're on. Then he thrusts the marijuana under their noses and asks them if they've ever seen what this stuff does to kids.

What happens next depends on the PCs. If they try to take him into custody, he resists. If they succeed in capturing him, the cops don't want to believe that he's a criminal, and he vanishes from police custody within the hour.

None of the Irish mugs who were present that night will willingly testify against him—it's way too dangerous. Too Sweet's girlfriend is willing to do it, but she suffers a sudden and unexplained fall from the window of the police station where she's being held pending bail, and dies. Crazy Enrique is mad enough and brave enough to testify, but then he suddenly turns up with bandages over his eyes and mumbles to the PCs that he's changed his mind. Too Sweet considers helping them, but then the Mafia kidnaps one of his remaining kids and he abruptly reconsiders.

The Hammer of Justice will give the PCs one last chance to do the right thing. He'll appear to them on a rooftop when they aren't expecting it, and explain to them that it would hurt the city too badly for them to bring him down, and that he won't allow anyone to hurt his city like that.

If they don't see things his way, then he will try to hunt them down and kill them, one by one. The Mafia will be hunting them, too. However, if the PCs capture too many goombahs or bring too much public attention to the case, the mob will abruptly turn on the Hammer of Justice, who will find himself hunted by all sides.

Too Sweet

PL: 4

Str: 12 (+1) Dex: 10 (+0) Con: 14 (+2)
Int: 14 (+2) Wis: 14 (+2) Cha: 16 (+3)
Initiative: 0 Attack Bonus: 4 Defense: 4
Toughness Save: 2 Fortitude Save: 4
Reflexes Save: 4 Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Bluff 6 (+9), Gather Information 5 (+8), Knowledge (Business) 4 (+6), Knowledge (Civics) 3 (+5), Knowledge (Streetwise) 7 (+9), Notice 5 (+7), Profession (Drug Dealer) 9 (+11), Sense Motive 5 (+7), Stealth 4 (+4)

Feats: Connected, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Improved Defense

Enrique

PL: 3

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 3 **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 3 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Bluff 6 (+8), Intimidate 6 (+8),
Knowledge (Streetwise) 4 (+4), Sense
Motive 5 (+7), Stealth 4 (+7)

Feats: Startle, Taunt

Equipment: Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3
Damage)

Cesar

PL: 3

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 3 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Bluff 6 (+6), Intimidate 6 (+6),
Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+6), Notice 4
(+6), Stealth 4 (+6)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Quick-Draw, Startle

Equipment: Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3
Damage)

2) Housecleaning

Someone has been throwing crooked cops off bridges. The Hammer of Justice says he wants to know why. He warns the PCs to stay away from this case. Ham-fisted outsiders who don't know how to talk to cops will only make them clam up altogether.

When he speaks with the Player Characters about this matter, he seems oddly sympathetic to the corrupt cops who are being killed. Normally he has no pity for lawbreakers, but cops are a different matter. People don't understand how rough cops have it, he explains. Some people call it corruption when they shake down businesses for "donations" or heist a little dope out of the evidence room, but that's

because they don't understand how things are done. Internal Affairs—they're the real criminals. They commit the crime of betrayal, ratting out their brother officers. He wouldn't be surprised if they were behind this, somehow. It makes the department look bad and they love it when that happens.

If the PCs investigate further they will find that in fact all four of the cops who have died are under investigation by IA for assisting with Mob assassinations and stealing evidence. Two of the officers under investigation are still alive. One is Big Chuck O'Ryan. The other is a tubby, angry alcoholic named Norris Fuchs. Officer Fuchs hates parahumans and he won't be pleased to see the PCs. But he needs their help more than he realizes. For Norris Fuchs is now the last living person who can turn state's evidence against Big Chuck. If the Player Characters don't find some way to protect him, the Hammer of Justice will throw him off a bridge. He killed the other four officers too, although the Player Characters will have a tough time proving it.

Officer Norris Fuchs

PL: 3

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 3 (1 without body
armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Bluff 8 (+9), Climb 2 (+4), Drive 4
(+4), Intimidate 5 (+6), Investigate 4 (+5),
Knowledge (Civics) 3 (+4), Medicine 2 (+3),
Notice 5 (+6), Profession (Police Officer) 4
(+5), Search 5 (+6), Sense Motive 6 (+7),
Stealth 3 (+3)

Feats: Chokehold, Improved Grapple,
Quick-Draw, Taunt

Equipment: Body Armor (3 Protection),
Nightstick (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage),
Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

double zed



"I firmly support your crusade for justice and suggest that we join forces. You may begin by helping me to kill this man. Be aware, the sincerity of your commitment to justice will be assessed by the speed, efficiency and thoroughness of your compliance."

Real Name: Unknown (may be "ZZ-183")
PL: 18

Str: 44/14 (+17/+2) **Dex:** 18 (+4)
Con: 14 (+2) **Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 18 (+4)
Cha: 12 (+1)
Initiative: 8 **Attack Bonus:** 17
Defense: 15
Toughness Save: 18 (16 Impervious, 2 without Battlesuit) **Fortitude Save:** 6
Reflexes Save: 8 **Willpower Save:** 15

Skills: Intimidate 10 (+11), Knowledge (Civics) 5 (+6), Notice 6 (+10), Profession (Interdimensional Police officer) 10 (+11), Search 5 (+9)

Feats: Fearless, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Takedown Attack

Powers: Device (Battlesuit, hard to lose, see below for details), Device (Wrist-Mounted Prognosticator; Super-Senses 4 [Precognition; Flaw: Limited Power, Only tells Double-Zed the probability of achieving her mission, not of her survival or anything

else that might be useful])

BattleSuit: Blast 18, Comprehend 4 (Languages, can speak as well as listen), Communicate 5 (Radio, 10 Mile Radius), Enhanced Strength 30, Flight 15, Immunity 9 (Life Support), Impervious Protection 16, Super-Movement 6 (Dimensional Movement [Can Travel to any Dimension], Super-Senses 18 (Awareness [Extradimensional Energies], Blindsight, Darkvision, Detect [Disturbances in the dimensional flow], Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Infravision, Microscopic Vision, Radio, Radius Vision [can see in 360 degrees], Time Sense, Ultravision, X-Ray Vision), Super-Strength 10 (Maximum Lift: 12.5 Thousand Tons; Power Feats: Shockwave, Groundstrike), Teleport 10 (Normal Range: 1,000 feet; Extended Range: 200,000 miles [anywhere within the Moon's orbit]; Power Feats: Change Direction, Change Velocity, Easy; Extras: Accurate)

Complications: Fanatically dedicated. Never smiles, cracks a joke or thinks about anything apart from her mission.

Background: A cross-time police officer from some distant parallel world. She serves an order that she calls "The Hegemony" and a leader called "The Ultrarch" who rules a thousand dimensions at the far end of time. The Hegemony is a code of laws, a system of government, a communications network and a warlike transcendental philosophy all at once. It resembles a kind of Zen Fascism and the Ultrarch is its leader, pope, arch-guru and God, despite being a computer simulation modeled on the collective opinions of his people.

Double Zed is calm, self-possessed and extremely professional. Almost always patient with civilians, she seldom gets mad. She is also irrationally obsessed with killing and eliminating any trace of one particular person from every time-line she visits. Fixated on her task to the point of psychosis, she cannot be dissuaded from it and will use any means, no matter how ruthless, to accomplish it. She may have killed him hundreds of times by now, or thousands. Each time she carefully erases any records of his ever having existed and is

particularly methodical about obliterating anything he may have written, or that might record some of his ideas. Alas, it is often difficult to tell exactly who he is in a given universe and she has made many mistakes. Still, it's better to be safe than sorry. The people she has mistakenly killed never trouble her for long.

While Double Zed is almost always soft spoken and never loses her temper, it doesn't take long for people to notice the murderous intensity of her psychotic stare, and to be severely unnerved by it. She has no friends, no personal life and no interests apart from killing her target once more. You could show her a fantastic sunset, a great work of art, a shocking crime or a child in danger and she would barely notice. Devoid of humor, she knows what jokes are, but does not respond to them. She tends to speak in bland, ominous platitudes, like a politician making a speech.

Her lips move out of synch with her voice, which sounds as though it may have been produced by some kind of mechanical translator. When she speaks, her words appear above her in a dozen different languages (including an oddly spelled version of English and what look like product codes). Sometimes her translator fails to adequately convey her thoughts and she'll blurt out some weird non-sequitur or even a hopelessly scrambled pop-culture reference. (*"Surrender now, and spare yourself the sporks and squeegees of unthinking spatula!"*) How often this happens depends on how silly or how grim the GM wants to make her look.

A dedicated servant of justice, Double Zed is perfectly willing to ally herself with superheroes if they agree to assist her in her quest. She may even help them fight crimes. However, the moment she senses that someone disapproves of what she is doing or might try to stop her, she will attempt to kill or cripple them.

She pulls no punches in combat. Despite her honorable demeanor, she has no objection to hitting opponents from behind, attacking them while they're down and so forth. She doesn't understand people well enough to deceive or manipulate them, so she won't lead them

into traps or betray them to their enemies, but this is not because she feels any moral qualms. It probably won't occur to her to take hostages or to threaten an opponent's family, but if she somehow figures out that this would be an effective tactic, she will do it with her usual level of dispassion.

Although she would prefer to ally herself with local law-enforcement, she will accept help from any quarter, including supervillains. No matter what she does, no matter how despicable it is, she will always utter some kind of bland and arrogant justification for her actions, insisting that anyone who questions her is a criminal. (*"Moral trepidations are a sign that you feel uncertain of your correctness. The Hegemony recognizes no uncertainty."*)

Using Double Zed in Your Campaign:

There are two good ways to use Double Zed. She can be a one shot villain on a rampage, killing people seemingly at random until either the PCs stop her or she kills the right target and leaves. Or, if you want her to stick around, she could initially present herself to the PCs as an ally, then do things that are too ruthless for them to stomach, later team up with a supervillain group and ultimately try to destroy the world with some arch-villain's doomsday machine, in order to make sure that her target dies.

If she becomes a recurrent villain then she will vary her tactics every time she tries to kill the target, getting more ruthless and endangering more innocent lives each time. She'll start by trying to shoot him. She may end by trying to blow up the city—or the world.

The PCs may or may not find out that the Hegemony she serves is extinct and the Ultrarch is dead, both destroyed by the man she pursues. Does he exist in our reality? If so, who is he? That's up to the GM, but we recommend the Aleph, from the Legion of the Damned (see the individual entry on this troubled arch-villain, listed on Page 184).

Adventures With Double Zed:

1) Your Assistance Is Required

Just as a major villain has the Player

Characters on the ropes, Double Zed appears from nowhere and blasts him (or her) into oblivion. She explains that she is what they would call a policewoman, from the far end of the multiverse. She is hunting the ultimate criminal. But her knowledge of this dimension is insufficient for her to efficiently locate her target. The PCs will assist her, in the name of the Hegemony and Universal Justice, she announces.

If the PCs agree to help her, she will want access to their files, instructions in how to use 21st century computers, the World Wide Web, the telephone system and in the finer points of human society as it is practiced in this reality. It's difficult to track her prey without knowing how to look. She will agree to assist the PCs in their own crusade for justice and will be willing to accompany them on missions.

As noted in her character description, she is unsettling company and she's much quicker to resort to lethal force than most PC teams are likely to be comfortable with. Just as they get close to confronting her about her casual disregard for human life, she suddenly announces that she has found the target. She will require their assistance in killing him.

If the PCs decide to play along, she will produce a list of men in their late 60s, all of whom were born in the Western United States at midnight on July 4, 1939. One of them is the target. They will work their way down the list in alphabetical order, killing each one in turn to ensure the target is liquidated. The first one on the list is a college professor named Dr. Harlan Azeria.

If the PCs balk at helping her kill Dr. Azeria, she says that their non-compliance has been duly noted and will count against them when and if a finding is assessed on them. Then she leaves.

If the PCs go try to protect Doctor Azeria, they find him to be a mild and somewhat addled old gentleman who has devoted his life to researching the poetry of medieval France. With his long nose, thick glasses and querulous air he resembles a mole. Dr. Azeria will be very surprised to hear that his life is in danger and he will require a lot of convincing before he agrees to let the PCs protect him.

The PCs may or may not have seen enough of the list to know where to intercept Double Zed once they drive her away from poor old Doctor Azeria, but it should be easy enough to research the names themselves. Just look for old men born in the west at midnight on the date in question.

If on the other hand the PCs refuse to have anything to do with Double Zed from the start, events unfold very differently. When the PCs initially rebuff her, she says that their non-compliance has been duly noted against them, and she will go off on her own.

Some time later, she turns up in the company of a supervillain group, assisting them in their nefarious schemes in exchange for the information she is seeking. The first time the PCs confront her in the company of her new friends, she starts to fight them, but then suddenly announces that her computers have finished processing the information and that the villain group's assistance is no longer required.

She switches sides and kills all her teammates, announcing that *"The delayed results of your finding will now be enacted."*

Double Zed tells the PCs that she now knows where to find her target, that she is going to kill him and that their assistance is required. She then goes off to kill all the men on the list, as above. She may or may not have shared the list with the PCs before she does, depending on how the conversation went.

If at any point in the adventure the PCs attempt to strike or physically restrain Double Zed, she says coldly that this too has been noted against them in the event that a finding must be issued. Then she says that the finding will be issued immediately. There is a whirring sound, Double Zed tells them that a finding has now been issued and will be enacted at once. She then attacks the PCs with all her strength.

There is an easier way to avert a tragedy here than chasing off Double Zed (in which case she'll only come back or go try to kill the next old man on her list). Player Characters who have taken the time to find out how Double Zed constructed her list may come to the fight armed with a

critical piece of information. The list is woefully inaccurate. She located her targets by doing web searches on their birthdates, phone numbers and addresses. But it never occurred to her that some people might not be listed in commercial phone directories. Nor does she understand how time zones work—her list is completely inadequate.

If confronted with these uncomfortable facts, Double Zed will thank the PCs for their assistance and say that this mitigates the finding she had reached about them. She will muse aloud over whether or not it would still be acceptable to kill Doctor Azeria and the others, just on the off-chance that they might be the target. She calculates the “Justice Ratio”. The word “Unacceptable” flashes over her head in a bunch of different languages. She then apologizes to Dr. Azeria for any inconvenience he may have suffered during the enactment of Justice, and leaves.

Doctor Azeria

PL: 4

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 8 (-1)
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 0 **Defense:** 2
Toughness Save: -1 **Fortitude Save:** -1
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 5

Skills: Concentration 9 (+12), Computers 1 (+5), Knowledge (History) 9 (+13), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 9 (+13), Languages (Anglo-Saxon, Frankish, French, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish), Notice 4 (+7), Profession (college professor) 7 (+11), Profession (scholar of Medieval French Poetry) 9 (+13)

Feats: Skill Mastery, (Concentration, Knowledge [History], Knowledge [Theology and Philosophy], Profession [scholar of Medieval French Poetry])

2) Justice for All

After some initial failures, hardships and frustrating encounters with Earth's superheroes, Double Zed begins to wonder if this mission is hopeless, and if she will have to resort to Plan B, as she has on so many other Earths. While fighting the Player Characters yet again, she recalculates the Justice Ratio and finds that if she does it right, she can just get the numbers to work.

Plan B is hereby enacted. She announces this, breaks off combat and flies away. What does she intend to do?

Over the next few weeks, Double Zed attacks the lairs of NPC gadgeteers and makes off with various communications components they have developed. Then she attacks a super-secret Russian military base out in the middle of the steppes. This subterranean facility has been mothballed for decades and is manned by a staff of highly trained soldiers who have no idea what they are guarding. They call it “Soviet Science City Seven”.

The men guarding the complex will fight to the death, not out of loyalty to the State, but because Soviet Science City Seven is their home—they have all had their pasts erased and most of them feel troubled by the changes that have come to Russia. Many of them haven't left the facility in ten years, or wanted to. All of them are as tough as any Spetsnaz commando—these are PL6 elite soldiers with the best equipment Russian science can provide. Here are some stats for them.

Guardians of Soviet Science City Seven

PL: 6

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus (Melee):** 4
Attack Bonus (Ranged): 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 5 (+1 without body armor)
Fortitude Save: 4
Reflexes Save: 5
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Drive 3 (+6), Intimidate 4 (+4), Medicine 2 (+2), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (Soldier) 4 (+4), Search 6 (+7), Stealth 5 (+8)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Attack Focus (Ranged) 2, Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment), Precise Shot

Equipment: Body Armor (+4 Toughness), Darkvision Goggles, Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 6 damage [Extra: Autofire])

The target is a doomsday device, designed by the late Doctor Viktor Chernov (better known in the west as “Citizen VI”,

see his description on Page 13), the greatest theoretical physicist Russia ever produced. Doctor Chernov's mathematics are too advanced for most human minds to follow, but his weapon seems to have been designed to unweave the deep-informational structure of the world, effectively annihilating everything within about a light-second of Soviet Science City Seven.

With the parts that Double Zed has scavenged, she can reprogram the weapon and arm it. Then she can be sure that the target will die, along with the rest of the planet, and she can move on to the next parallel reality to kill him all over again.

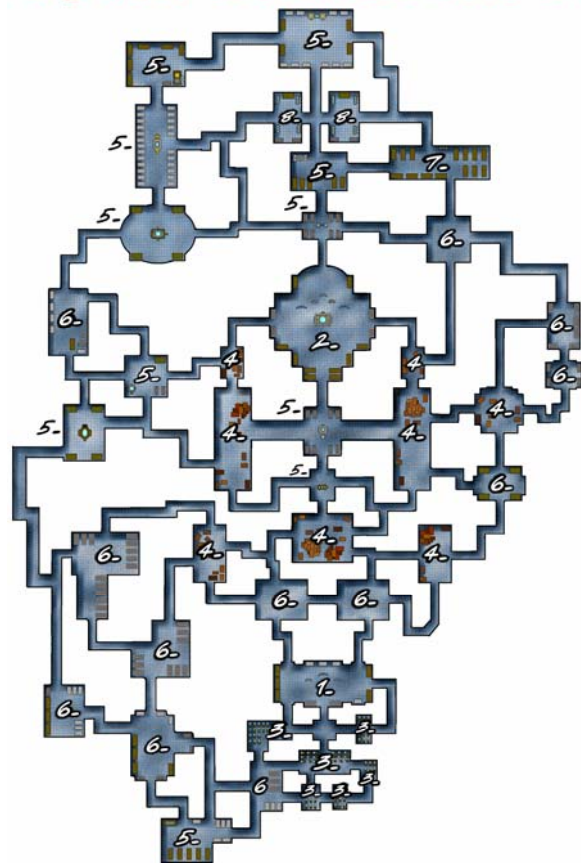
The PCs probably won't be able to figure out where Double Zed is going on their own. But one of the gadgeteers she stole the parts from has figured it out, and will tell them the whole thing.

The Russian authorities will be suspicious about letting them into the country, at least one Russian superteam will try to intercept them, the soldiers stationed at Soviet Science City Seven will attempt to keep them from entering the facility and of course Double Zed will do her best to drive them off. Still, with the fate of the world at stake, the PCs don't really have much choice but to forge boldly ahead.

As an added twist, if the PCs and the Russians press Double Zed too hard, she suddenly abandons her efforts and vanishes. Then the PCs learn that there is another, almost identical facility that the Americans built, hundreds of feet below the Nevada desert. Can they catch Double Zed before she reaches it?

As an additional twist, if Double Zed is beating the PCs badly, perhaps the Aleph and his Legion of the Damned come to their rescue. If this happens, and you have decided that the Aleph is in fact Double Zed's target, then during the course of the battle she kills him. Once the Aleph is dead, Double Zed announces that the target has been eliminated—justice has been served. She knew she could draw him out of hiding by threatening his survival, she adds. Then she departs our reality to go hunt the Aleph down once more. What effect this will have on the internal structure and politics of the Legion of the Damned, we leave to you.

SOVIET SCIENCE CITY 7



Brief Guide to Soviet Science City 7

- 1) Central Control Room. Activating or resetting the Doomsday Device from this room requires a Computers Check vs. DC 25
- 2) Doomsday Control Room. Double Zed's objective. Activating or resetting the Doomsday Device from this room requires a Computers Check vs. DC 20.
- 3) Barracks. These spartan rooms each house a few dozen Guardians, in dormitory-style bunk beds.
- 4) Storage. These rooms are full of crated supplies—sometimes very strange ones.
- 5) Weird Labs. One or another weapons-testing project is running here.
- 6) Dead Room. Empty or full of ancient, rusting, defunct computer banks.
- 7) Emergency Backup Control Room. Activating or resetting the Doomsday Device from this room requires a Computers Check vs. DC 30
- 8) Generator Rooms. Mysterious power source for the entire complex. No one but Dr. Chernov has ever understood it.

PROFESSOR PURGATORY



"I'll burn the world to cinders with the flames of truth and righteousness"

Real Name: Unknown
PL: 18

Str: 38 (+14) /18 (+4) **Dex:** 16 (+3)
Con: 20 (+5) **Int:** 25 (+7) **Wis:** 38 (+14)
Cha: 24 (+7)
Initiative: 8 **Attack Bonus:** 15
Defense: 13 **Toughness Save:** 20/5
(without his battlesuit) **Fortitude Save:** 13
Reflexes Save: 10 **Willpower Save:** 14

Skills: Craft (mechanical) 15 (+22), Disable Device 15 (+22), Diplomacy 14 (+21), Gather Information 10 (+17), Intimidate 10 (+17), Knowledge (arcane lore) 15 (+22), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 15 (+22), Notice 8 (+22), Search 5 (+12), Stealth 5 (+8), Sense Motive 5 (+19)

Feats: Artificer, Assessment, Equipment 23 (115 pts worth), Improved Initiative,

Improvised Tools, Inventor, Inspire, Leadership, Master Plan, Ritualist, Takedown Attack

Powers: Dark Vision; Device 24 (Battlesuit, 120 Points, Battlesuit is equipped with the following powers: Blast 17, Enhanced Strength 20, Flight 5 (100mph), Force Field 10, Protection 5, Super-Movement [Interdimensional Travel] 4, Teleport 6); Immunity 6 (Aging, Disease, Exhaustion, Hunger and Thirst, Poison, Sleep), Magic 10 (Flaws: None, but it takes 2 full rounds for him to shift between spells, see "Drawbacks"; prepared spells are: Darkness Control, Create Object, Environmental Control [Light; Distraction, Hamper Movement,], and Telekinesis), Regeneration 5 (+3 to recover checks, roll to recover every 5 minutes)

Equipment: Normally has at least 75 points in a Headquarters, and the rest of his points are usually tied up in some big, dangerous device or other, which he hopes will destroy the world or make him a god or both.

Complications: Fanatical madman convinced of his own divinity, never breaks his word once he has given it.

Drawbacks: Action (it requires two full rounds for Professor Purgatory to change between spells) -2pts; Power Loss (the Professor must be able to speak arcane formulae and freely make esoteric gestures to invoke/maintain spells, to create "on the spot" occult devices, or cast rituals); Vulnerable (as a creature of magic, Professor Purgatory is moderately vulnerable to piercing/stabbing weapons made of cold-wrought iron or weapons specially consecrated against supernatural evil by a holy man/woman (blessing requires 20+ ranks in Arcane Lore, and the Artificer and Ritual feats) -3pts; Weak Point (battlesuit is susceptible to critical hits from attacks that strike the power jewel in the center of the breast plate) -1pt.

Background: Professor Purgatory's earliest memories date back to an isolated monastery in the hills of Montenegro (later a part of Yugoslavia) in 1915. He first became aware of his own existence standing naked on a dais in the middle of an antechamber. It was clear from the occult paraphernalia

and the mystic sigils inscribed on the floor that some arcane ritual had been attempted, perhaps a summoning of some sort. It was also obvious that something had gone awry; the bloody, mutilated bodies of the monks strewn about the chamber and the hallways testified to that. He felt no fear or even curiosity about the carnage, only a grim sense of satisfaction. The monks had committed some act of evil, he was certain, and had paid the just price for their transgressions. Taking a tattered set of robes and a simple pair of sandals from one of the monks, he left the temple to seek the answers of his existence in the outside world. Thus began years of wandering the world, sometimes working, sometimes begging, often cold, hurt, or hungry, always alone, and relentlessly searching.

As he wandered the earth and the years passed he learned that he was not like other men. He was superior in nearly every way. His mind was quicker and surer. He did not age and he did not tire. He experienced hunger and thirst, but did not weaken or suffer from lack of food or drink. He was never touched by plague or infection. Any insult to his body healed with unnatural speed, wounds closing in seconds. Most fantastic of all, he could bend reality itself to his will through his spoken words. The very laws of nature could not hold against his precisely crafted, meticulous mathematical and philosophical arguments. He could speak Power to Truth.

In his travels he also discovered that sin abounded in the world... sin was all around him, permeating every corner of the earth. The selfish who refused to grant him the alms of clothing and coins he requested (until he simply took them), the wrathful who responded to his modest requests with vulgarities and threats (until he chastised them), the lustful who tempted the flesh by flaunting their bodies (until he taught them shame) — all of these had to learn their errors through lessons of humiliation and pain. And so he did teach them, at every opportunity and with great thoroughness. Those he punished would never forget their lessons.

It was during one such lesson that his true nature was revealed to him. It was

1936. He was in a back alley in Djakarta, teaching the virtue of modesty to a young woman who had had the temerity to suggest he join her for an obscene act. As he made certain she would never enjoy normal relations again (thus ridding her of her perverse nature) he experienced a moment of clarity. He knew why he had abilities far beyond those of other men, and why he could not abide the immorality rampant in the world: He was a divine being—an angel. It was he who had been summoned by the monks in the temple—and it was he who had slain them for their transgression, for attempting to bind a creature of the higher planes to their will. Crying tears of joy, he threw his arms wide and willed himself back to Heaven.

And then...nothing happened. He was still standing in a muddy alleyway in a squalid little country, the air filled with the sobs of the wretched slattern he had punished. But why—why was he being denied his place in Paradise? Then he was struck by another thought: it was obvious the monks had been allowed to bring him to Earth for a reason. He was here to provide instruction for the fallen, to redeem those who still had the potential for salvation...and put an end to those who did not. That had to be the answer. He had allowed himself to be summoned to the material plane by the vile monks, almost becoming their cat's-paw, and so had become unworthy in the eyes of God. He had to prove himself to his Lord. But he would no longer walk among mankind anonymously, concealing his glory in undistinguished human flesh and humble garments. He had to make the world understand that an Agent of Righteousness was among them, ready to punish the wicked and the strong and to protect the good and the weak. Searching for inspiration, he found it in the tattered pages of an American newspaper detailing the exploits of the costumed adventurers and masked "mystery men" who had recently debuted on the world stage. Some, like him, also seemed to possess powers beyond those of mortals. These were not angels of course, but likely God-Touched nonetheless. He felt a kinship with these men. He would style himself after them.

He set to work, creating a gleaming suit of armor (acquiring the occult and technological materials he required by whatever means needed, as was his right). The mystic engineering of the armor allowed him to send forth bolts of “divine retribution”, searing energies to burn souls of sinners. Clad in this armor and a resplendent silver cloak, he adopted the identity of Professor Purgatory, Champion of Righteousness, and Bane of Corrupted Souls. Professor Purgatory pursued his mission with zeal, no longer engaging in random, furtive episodes of “redemption”, but aggressively pursuing corrupt businessmen and politicians, entertainers who paraded immorality, vice dealers, and false religious leaders. He rarely fought the various arch-fiends and master criminals that were emerging in this era, preferring instead to focus on those whom he considered the true source of society’s ills. Early on his crusade garnered a fair share of supporters, who often approved of the “Professor’s” actions against gangsters, war profiteers and scandalous celebrities. On a few occasions, Professor Purgatory even teamed-up with other heroes to combat the scourge of crime. But as time passed, Professor Purgatory’s cruel and indiscriminating nature became impossible to hide. His victims were as likely as not to be guilty of nothing more than offending his prejudices, while his punishments became increasingly creative and sadistic. Soon enough, Professor Purgatory was widely known as a psychopath and a supervillain, losing whatever public support he had enjoyed. The superheroes he once saw as his distant kinsmen turned against him, their efforts forcing him to stay on the move from one country and continent to the next. He takes this as further evidence of the sinful, fallen nature of the world.

After over six decades of punishing sinners of all stripes, Professor Purgatory experienced a crisis of faith. He had done everything he could to discourage evil and restore righteousness to the world, but he seemed no closer to regaining Heaven than ever. What had he missed? What was he overlooking? Then it struck him; he too had been corrupted by the world around him.

The overwhelming presence of sin all around him had tainted his angelic being, weighing down his soul. He had acquired human vices—anger, pride, vanity—that prevented his return to the Celestial Hallways. How then could he transcend these blights and restore the pristine condition of his spirit? Perhaps it would help if he destroyed the world?

Since that date he vanished from the public eye. He has spent the past few decades toiling away in secret on some huge and terrible project. A lot of people have forgotten about him, but he hasn’t forgotten us. His work is nearly complete and we will all find out what he has been crafting for us soon enough.

Professor Purgatory hasn’t been seen by the public in years and no one is sure what he would look like now. In fact he has barely changed at all. He is a tall, well built man seemingly in his mid to late thirties. His skin is almost ghostly pale, a stark contrast to his flame-red hair and gold-flecked eyes. Blue-black glyphs, runes, and sigils adorn his skin—each decade more of these seem to appear on his body; though the Professor believes they signify his return to a perfect state of being, their true significance is unknown. Sometimes when he uses his powers, and really exerts himself his hair briefly turns white. No one knows why. Clad in his flowing silver cloak and golden battle raiment, the Professor is an imposing figure. He always speaks and acts with a cold, aloof air, secure in the knowledge that he is morally superior to all those around him. His eyes seem focused on some far-distant vision no one else can perceive.

Using Professor Purgatory in Your

Campaign: A different kind of master villain, you can insert Professor Purgatory into an existing campaign at any moment, without seriously altering the campaign world’s history or changing its focus (which is always a risk with new major villains). We’ve designed this one to leave a minimal imprint on your game world. The Professor’s origins are unknown, he hasn’t been actively fighting superheroes for decades and most importantly, we haven’t

quite defined his intentions. He wants to become a god and he has one or more master schemes ready to launch that might make him one (all of them are likely to be crazy and doomed to failure). But these schemes could be anything from kidnaping a bunch of mystical superbeings and draining their powers into himself, to stealing some major artifact (which may or may not exist outside of his fevered imagination), to destroying the world. He's not a conqueror and he isn't interested in money—these are the only givens.

In combat, Professor Purgatory can be a truly horrendous foe. He is perhaps even more formidable than his PL and point totals indicate, as he is extremely versatile. His Inventor and Ritualist feats allow him to prepare any number of one-encounter powers in advance, so his armor could be outfitted with numerous other weapons and fortified with potent incantations besides its listed capabilities. He could spontaneously cast any number of magic spells (through extra effort and “on-the-spot” use of Ritualist). In short Professor Purgatory should “realistically” be more than a match for a reasonably sized PL 10-12 hero team.

To remedy this, you can play the Professor as massively overconfident, contemptuous of the possibility that any band of “mere mortals” could ever defeat him. He simply sees no reason to thoroughly prepare himself for combat, trusting in his innate skills and the inherent might of his arcane battlesuit.

On the other hand, if the PC team is especially large, powerful, or effective, the GM should feel free to put the heroes up against an extensively prepared Professor Purgatory. He can have several “pre-set” magical effects ready to go off against his foes and the spells listed for the Magic power could be altered to include more offensive powers such as Animate Object or Dazzle. The level of threat is all up to the discretion of the game master.

Adventures With Professor Purgatory: Salvation for the Damned

Professor Purgatory stumbles onto the existence of the Legion of the Damned—the world's most dangerous supervillain group

(see their description on page 175). Truth to tell, he has long suspected the presence of some sort of vast conspiracy behind the world's events and the evidence he uncovers has merely confirmed it. The Legion, for its part, has been aware of the Professor and his activities for some years. Captain Sinister has considered asking him to join the team more than once, but the mysterious Doctor Dagon has always vehemently opposed the idea. He hates the Professor and has always wanted the Legion to destroy him. Like so much about Doctor Dagon, his reasons remain unknown.

For his part, the Professor has no desire to submerge himself in a team. His ego won't allow him to play second fiddle to anyone. Instead, he will make the Legion his own! United under his banner, they will be a force for truth and righteousness like the world has never seen before!

In order to bring them under his sway, the Professor decides to master each of the Legion's members in turn. Once he has subdued them, he can give them a good talking to and they will (he believes) be swayed by his personal magnetism and gladly join his cause.

To lure them out into the open, he steals a number of doomsday devices and unthinkably powerful magical artifacts and sets them up at various locations around the world, ready to cause havoc. He triggers them one by one, and the Legion starts sending team members out to stop each disaster. The PCs get involved when they find that Professor Purgatory is battling some long-vanished supervillain like the Blue Bolt (see Page 233) or the Black Sun (see Page 244) over the streets of their city, with some awful doomsday device ticking away underneath them. Which side will they take? If the PCs fail to capture the Professor (and they probably will) then he pops up in another city, fighting another famous villain who also hasn't been heard from in years. Whenever the GM wants to end this cheery romp, the Aleph (see Page 184) shows up to face the Professor in person. They have a long talk, and part as friends. What did they speak of? No one ever knows. But the war between the Professor and the Legion is suddenly over.

Nobody



"Hey mister! You gots a bar a chocolate? I killsss whoever you wan'. I kill him real good, if you got a bar of chocolate I could haff."

Real Name: Herbert Almquist Sloan (but he can't remember it anymore)

PL: 20

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 24 (+7) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 8 (-1) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 23 **Attack Bonus (Melee):** 28
Attack Bonus (Ranged): 30 **Defense:** 30
Toughness Save: 10 **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 20 **Willpower Save:** 18

Skills: Acrobatics 23 (+30), Climb 17 (+20), Notice 25 (+29), Stealth 23 (+30)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Ambidexterity, Assessment, Attack Focus (Ranged) 2, Blind-Fight,

Chokehold, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 6, Dodge Focus 13, Elusive Target, Endurance, Evasion 2, Fast Overrun, Fearless, Grappling Finesse, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Aim, Improved Block, Improved Critical (with pistol), Improved Defense, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative 4, Improved Overrun, Improved Pin, Improved Sunder, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Instant Stand, Interpose, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Prone Fighting, Quick-Draw, Ranged Pin, Redirect, Second Chance 2 (Notice and Stealth), Sneak Attack 2, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Throwing Mastery, Tracking, Uncanny Dodge (Auditory, Olfactory, Visual), Weapon Bind, Weapon Break

Powers: Strike 10 (Extra: Mighty)

Equipment: Two big scary pistols that do 8 Damage in Nobody's superbly skilled hands (Extra: Autofire)

Complications: Mentally challenged, can't read, keep track of money, remember anything for more than a week, hold a useful job or in fact do anything but kill people. Willing to kill for a bar of chocolate

Background: His name is Nobody. He was the world's greatest killer, America's premier assassin. Now he's nothing at all.

Good enough to have made a fortune if he had gone into business for himself, H. A. Sloan never had any head for business, nor much interest in anything apart from killing people, so he obediently stuck with whatever intelligence agency they assigned him to and lived on a civil servant's pittance. He wasn't a sniper or a martial artist, exactly—although he was extremely competent in both of those arenas. He was more of a close-in gunfighter, so fast and adept that he could quickly overwhelm any roomful of thugs you might care to send him into.

He was the killer they sent to hunt down other killers, which suited him just fine. No one could touch him. Then, on an assignment in Katmandu, a random bullet that someone fired into the air a mile away happened by sheer chance to strike him in the head. It didn't kill him—just turned him into a moron gibbering for chocolate.

Amazingly enough, this chocoholic defective is still the greatest killer alive. In fact by removing his ability to read or make long-term plans or remember anything for more than a week, it has actually made him better and more focused, by taking away everything that might distract him from his trade. His skill now approaches the superhuman. It's almost a shame no one makes use of it.

These days he hangs around the slums of Katmandu, dressed in the fraying remnants of his suit, begging bars of chocolate from whoever will give him one. Beggars mock and taunt him, but he cares for nothing but his next bar of chocolate.

His bosses never looked for him, no rescue mission has ever arrived. It never occurred to his superiors that anything could kill H. A. Sloan, so when he didn't come back from Katmandu they assumed that he had decided to go freelance or retire, and that it would no doubt be extremely hazardous to their health if they ever sent anyone after him. So instead of trying to rescue Sloan, they hastily set about destroying any evidence that he had ever existed. They did a good job. No one but a few street flotsam in Nepal know about Nobody, and they have no idea how dangerous he is.

He hasn't been taking very good care of himself, frostbite claimed some of his toes last winter and his teeth are starting to rot. He'll probably die soon from some infection or the leaking veins in his head. Until he does, he's the most deadly man alive, capable of killing just about anyone on earth. And he'll do it for a bar of chocolate.

Using Nobody in Your Campaign: Since Nobody is stuck in Katmandu, and no one really knows about him, he's not the kind of villain who can turn up every week. He works best as a horrible surprise, or as a resource that the Player Characters can use themselves if they get into a jam in Katmandu.

Detective PCs may find him while pursuing the trail of the CIA's most deadly assassin, mystics and martial artists may encounter him while journeying up into the Himalayas to visit some lost temple or

revered master. A PC who is intent on finding and challenging the greatest gunfighters in the world will reach him at the end of their quest. Super-agents may encounter him on their way to some secret mission across the Chinese border in Tibet. In fact Katmandu is a sort of nexus of weird events and a jumping off place for many strange adventures, any one of which could draw him in tangentially. It should always be a surprise, unless the PCs have specifically come to seek him out, and the GM should give them a chance to learn his full back-story and to marvel at the twisted irony of it all.

Adventures With Nobody: 1) Nobody Calling

The dreaded Yip Fang Tong is about to go to war with the sinister Burning Lotus Society. Both are among the most dangerous, secretive and ancient mystic orders of the Far East. Not only will they cause a lot of damage to any poor bystanders who get caught in their path, but who knows what kinds of hidden knowledge may be lost forever if they destroy each other?

The origins of the conflict are obscure. Both groups are closed to outsiders and hold themselves carefully aloof from the affairs of most mystics and martial artists. We do know that there are both more and less militant factions of the Yip Fang Tong and that the Burning Lotus' Council of Twelve is divided on the subject of the war as well.

There is talk of a last-ditch peace conference, to be held at the legendary Agharthic Temple, where the collective wisdom of mankind is said to be stored. No man knows where the Agharthic Temple lies, but certain texts indicate that it hovers invisibly, outside our reality, at a spot over the Himalayas.

Revered Master Yan of the Yip Fang Tong is on his way to the Peace Talks, when he gets gunned down in the streets of Katmandu. This should have been impossible. The man could catch bullets out of the air. Clearly someone very powerful did this. It looks as though the peace talks may be doomed.

If the PCs know about Nobody, they should at once suspect that someone hired Mr. Sloan to do the deed. If they go to Katmandu to get to the bottom of the matter, then almost at once they get assailed by militant factions of both the Yip Fang Tong and the Burning Lotus Society. They don't want Master Yan's death solved and they don't want the peace talks to succeed. They want blood and they want it in abundance. PL 3-5 Martial artists with headbands bearing the characters "Yip Fang for Eternity" assault the PCs in the street. The mystics of the Burning Lotus assail them with summonings. Here are some stats for a Yip Fang bullyboy and a Tibetan demon of the type the Burning Lotus might send.

Brothers of the Yip-Fang Tong



PL: 6

Str: 15 (+2) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 13 (+1) **Wis:** 17 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus** 7
Defense: 7 (3 if caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 6 (2 if caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6 **Willpower Save:** 5

Skills: Climb 6 (+8) Concentration 6 (+9), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 5 (+6), Notice 8 (+11), Stealth 8 (+11)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Dodge Focus 4, Defensive Roll 4, Evasion, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip, Takedown Attack, Throwing Mastery

Equipment: Staff (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage; Extra: Mighty)

Complications: Adheres absolutely to the Yip-Fang Code, utterly loyal, will gladly lay down life for the tong

Burning Lotus Demon



PL: 8

Str: 26 (+8) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus** (Melee): 10
Attack Bonus (Ranged): 6 **Defense:**
Toughness Save: 8 (5 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 8 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 8

Skills: Bluff 10 (+12), Intimidate 10 (+12), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Stealth 5 (+8)

Feats: Attack Focus (Melee) 4, Diehard, Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Power Attack, Startle, Taunt

Powers: Immunity 10 (Aging, Disease, Fatigue, Invisibility, Poison, Suffocation), Impervious Protection 5, Super-Senses 5 (Acute Smell, Darkvision, Scent, Tracking)

Equipment: Big Mean Club (Melee Weapon, 8 damage)

Complications: Impossible to conceal its blatantly demonic looks, could never function in normal human society.

Drawbacks: Hideous (moderate, very common,)

If the PCs can actually find Nobody, they discover that he was indeed hired to kill Master Yan, but by neither group. In fact Yan was rude to a street urchin who begged him for alms. The urchin grew enraged, stole a bar of chocolate from a

shop and gave it to Nobody. If the PCs can explain this to the Yip Fang Tong and the Burning Lotus Society, they will suddenly realize the pettiness of their quarrel, the fleeting and impermanent nature of all things, and the war will end before it starts. Of course, to do this, the PCs may have to find the Agharthic Temple.

If you feel the PCs have suffered enough without having to climb the Himalayas as well, then use a different means for them to contact the feuding parties. After they have fended off a few assaults and uncovered the truth, the Yip Fang Tong sends one of its Revered Masters, Kang-Yuk, to deal with them. At the same time, the Burning Lotus Society sends Master Black from the Council of Twelve on the same errand. There are some stats for Kang-Yuk and Master Black listed at the end of this adventure, in case you need them—although the scenario would actually work out better if the PCs don't have to fight either one of them.

Kang-Yuk and Master Black arrive at the same time and begin to argue over who gets to kill the PCs first. If the PCs explain the situation to them, they are shocked and suddenly realize how stupid and futile their conflict really is.

Kang-Yuk and Master Black were the two most militant leaders of their respective sides, and once they have changed their minds, the peace talks are sure to succeed. If you want one last fight, then perhaps the martial artists who have been trailing the PCs and a demon or two break down the door right at this moment, and everyone starts hitting everybody else. This won't foul up the peace talks. In fact it will leave Master Kang-Yuk and Master Black more convinced than ever of the pointlessness of their feud.

Kang-Yuk



PL: 13

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 21 (+5) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 13 (+1) **Cha:** 11 (+0)
Initiative: 17 **Attack Bonus** (Melee): 18
Attack Bonus (Ranged): 13
Defense: 13 (5 if unable to dodge)
Toughness Save: 12 (2 if unable to dodge) **Fortitude Save:** 10
Reflexes Save: 13 **Willpower Save:** 13

Skills: Acrobatics 15 (+20), Climb 10 (+13), Concentration 6 (+7), Escape Artist 10 (+15), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 5 (+7), Notice 15 (+16), Search 6 (+7), Stealth 15 (+20)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Assessment, Attack Focus (melee) 5, Connected, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 10, Dodge Focus 8, Evasion 2, Improved Critical (with bare-handed "Strike" power), Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative 2, Improved Trip, Improved Throw, Instant Stand, Leadership, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Redirect, Second Chance (Reflexes Save), Set-Up, Sneak Attack 4, Takedown Attack, Teamwork, Throwing Mastery, Track, Uncanny Dodge (Auditory, Visual), Weapon Bind, Weapon Break

Powers: Deflect 12 (Works on arrows, thrown objects and bullets, but not on energy blasts), Healing 5, Leaping 4 Strike 8 (Extra: Mighty)

Master Black



PL: 14

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)

Int: 19 (+4) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 18 (+4)

Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus** 9

Defense: 8

Toughness Save: 2 (16 with Force Field)

Fortitude Save: 8 **Reflexes Save:** 8

Willpower Save: 14

Skills: Concentration 5 (+10), Intimidate 8 (+12), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 12 (+16), Languages (Arabic, Chinese, Ancient Chinese, Hindi, Hmong, Nepalese, Parsi, Pushtu, Samoyed, Tungus, Tibetan, Uighur, Uzbek, Vietnamese), Notice 10 (+15), Stealth 10 (+13), Sense Motive 7 (+12)

Feats: Connected, Inspire, Leadership, Minions 10, Sidekick 5 (various unsavory extradimensional entities that the uninitiated call "demons").

Powers: Insubstantial 4 (Incorporeal), Immunity 10 (Illusions, Invisibility), Magic 13 (Spells: Force Field; Power Feats: Alternate Powers:, Comprehend [Human Languages], ESP, Invisibility, Mind Control, Teleportation [Range 1,000 feet, Extended Range: 200 thousand miles, Power Feats: Change Direction, Change Velocity, Easy], Mental Transformation [Can alter the target's memories but not their fundamental personality]), Super Senses 4 (Magical Awareness, Acute, Extended, Radius)

Complications: Only wears snow-white garments.

2) Nobody Can Save You Now

A CIA courier named Wilberforce Ott gets sent to Katmandu to pick up a very important message. It's data on a terrorist/supervillain who the Americans have been after for years. Use whichever major villain or Islamic fundamentalist goon you think would work best for your campaign. This should be someone tough enough that the PCs have reason to fear him. Or, if you don't have a character like that, he's a fiend called the Masked Mahdi, (also known as the Hooded Terror) who has the ability to dominate the minds of others. Use the Psychic Template from the basic rulebook. He's only PL 10, but surrounded with an army of PL 5 Shiite fanatics who are willing to die at his command. Not a typical group of ill-trained, haphazardly equipped terrorists, they may be the heirs to the legendary Assassin Brotherhood from the age of the Crusades. Very bad guys to mess around with.

The CIA has finally someone inside the Mahdi's organization who is willing to talk. This is the first solid lead they've had in decades.

Ott makes the pickup with no difficulty. But as he's killing time waiting for his flight, he accidentally sees H. A. Sloan lurking in an alley. It's all a coincidence, Sloan has no idea who Ott is or who he works for, he's just scrounging around in the alley looking for food. But of course the courier doesn't know this. In fact, poor Ott is now certain that this whole mission was a trap, that he's been betrayed and sent up into the mountains to be killed. After all, you never see Mr. Sloan unless he's here to kill somebody. Ott is almost flattered to think that they sent their best guy for him. In a fit of desperate rage, he opens the papers, finds out where the Hooded Terror can be located and makes contact with him. Ott is sure that he's going to die, nobody ever escapes from Mr. Sloan, but he's determined to betray his bosses and do as much harm as possible to the Agency before he goes down.

The CIA's contact inside the Masked Mahdi's organization is petrified when she learns that the courier has switched sides. The papers he's carrying will directly

implicate her! She can't tell her CIA Control Officer—who knows how many people in the Agency may already be working for the Hooded Terror? In a panic, she contacts the PCs anonymously, and lets them know that the infamous Masked Mahdi will soon arrive in Katmandu to meet with a rogue CIA agent.

When the PCs show up in Katmandu, the Masked Mahdi senses treachery. He has Agent Ott killed while he's on his way to the meeting. The PCs find Ott as he lies dying in the street with a curved ceremonial dagger sticking out of his back. As he dies, he blurts out the whole story.

The CIA, meanwhile, has been wondering what's taking Ott so long and they've alerted some of their local contacts to be on the lookout for him. Their watchers see the PCs standing over Ott as he dies, and conclude that they must be agents of the Hooded Terror. A CIA hit squad is on its way to rub out the Player Characters, the Masked Mahdi's assassins are everywhere. Things look bleak for the PCs. But fortunately, they now know where to find the greatest killer alive. Anyone have a bar of chocolate?

The Masked Mahdi's Daggermen



PL: 5

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 4
Attack Bonus: 5 **Defense:** 5 **Toughness**
Save: 5 (1 if Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 4 **Willpower Save:** 4

Skills: Gather Information 5 (+5), Intimidate 6 (+6), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+6), Notice 6 (+8), Search 6 (+8), Stealth 9 (+14), Survival 8 (+10)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Connected, Improved Critical (Dagger), Sneak Attack 2, Startle, Ranged Pin, Throwing Mastery, Track

Equipment: Dagger (does 5 Damage in the hands of a master assassin)

Complications: Crazy fanatic who will gladly die or commit any horrible crime at the Masked Mahdi's word.

Dragon's master



"Gggggggllllaaaaaaaauuuuuugggh!"

Real Name: Reading its true name would permanently damage your mind, so for liability reasons we have deleted it from this volume.

PL: 25

Str: 50 (Counts 20 levels of Growth)(+20)
Dex: 10 (+0) **Con:** 60 (+25) **Int:** 20 (+5)
Wis: 30 (+10) **Cha:** 18 (+4)

Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 14
Defense: -1 **Toughness Save:** 25
Fortitude Save: 25 **Reflexes Save:** 0
Willpower Save: 25

Skills: Intimidate 15 (+29), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 25 (+30)

Feats: Ambidextrous, Distract, Environmental Adaptation (Water), Fascinate (linked to Intimidate), Fearsome Presence 15, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Sidekick (Doctor Dagon—see his description on Page 214), Startle

Powers: Additional Limbs 5 (25 of them!), Growth 20 (Size: Awesome; Grapple Modifier: 20; Stealth Modifier: -20; Intimidation Modifier: 10; Space: 40 feet; Reach: 20 feet; Extra: Innate; Flaw: Permanent), Immunity 15 (to Aging, Cold, Critical Hits, Fatigue, Heat, Illusions, Invisibility, Pressure, Radiation, Starvation, Suffocation 2, Vacuum), Super-Movement 3 (Dimensional Movement; can travel to any dimension; Flaw: Unreliable Power [Only works when the Stars are Right]), Super-Senses 6 (Blindsight, Darkvision, Infravision, Acute Hearing, Ultravision), Super-Strength 10 (Maximum Lift: 800 thousand tons [Includes the extra carrying capacity from 20 levels of Growth]; Power Feats: Groundstrike, Shockwave)

Complications: Looks and acts like a nightmarish horrific obscenity from beyond time and space.

Drawbacks: Disabled (Mute), Hideous (moderate, very common).

Background: Deep, deep beneath the cold black waters of the Arctic Ocean, Something lies dreaming. Something immense, ancient and evil beyond any human understanding of the term. Horrible nightmare Things that dwell far below the waves worship It with obscene and blasphemous rites, mad cultists chant its thousand names by bloody altars on moonless nights. Men have mistaken it for God but it is something much worse. Something that has no name. Did it come from the stars? Did it step out of some horrific ab-dimensional space? Is the Earth its home? No one knows (except perhaps for its chief acolyte, the creature they call Doctor Dagon—and he isn't telling).

It is unclear why no one has ever

seen the thing or detected Its presence beneath the Arctic ice. Nuclear submarines have passed through these waters for decades without showing any trace of a slumbering leviathan on their sonar. The truth seems to be that Dagon's Master exists in twelve dimensions, rather than our three and that in its quiescent stage it is only faintly present in our physical world. It will be solid enough when it wakes!

Few legends speak of this horror directly, most demons avoid talking about It and seem worried when they do. Most superheroes and practitioners of the mystic arts are all but unaware of Its existence, though many of them have encountered the edges of Its cult. This makes it hard to say anything about It with any real certainty (and also hopefully makes it easier for the GM to work into your campaign). Yet we do know It ruled this planet once and that It shall rule again. It is still sleeping now, but It stirs.

Using Dagon's Master in Your

Campaign: The Big Lurking Menace, Dagon's Master is so obscenely powerful that most adventures will revolve around preventing Doctor Dagon from waking it up, rather than fighting it directly. We've left the details of its history sketchy and tried to keep it on a separate track from the rest of your universe's mystic world, to make it easier to integrate into your campaign. File this one under "Nameless Incomprehensible Horror From Beyond."

Foiling Dagon's Master can easily serve as the focus of a whole campaign, with a huge climactic battle once the thing actually wakes up, but you certainly aren't obliged to make it the center of your game. Vary its minions according to how central a role you want it to play in your campaign. You can give it a worldwide cult with nefarious global aims or say that it's worshipped only by a few slobbering lunatics and aquatic monstrosities.

The thing has power over creatures of the sea and monsters from the deepest depths of dreams, so it's possible to have all kinds of awful indirect encounters with its minions, without putting your player characters in the position of having to either

beat it or watch the world get devoured. But you also don't have to relegate Dagon's Master to a totally off-screen role. If you like, you can run an adventure where Dagon and his cultists manage to get the thing stirring for long enough to wreak some havoc on passing nuclear submarines and a remote Arctic outpost or two before it decides the stars aren't right and settles back into its endless slumber.

A really daring GM might actually let the thing destroy humanity if the PCs fail to stop it, and then send them off to see if they can save some parallel world before it wakes up there.

Adventures With Dagon's Master: 1) The Stars are Right!

Artists, poets, mystics and psychics around the world are awakened from sleep by horrible dreams they cannot recall. They all wake at once, with screams on their lips. 12 hours later, with the other half of the world in darkness, it happens again. Twelve hours after that, the dreams return to the Western Hemisphere, but they have gotten worse. Hundreds of thousands of minds are affected at once—anyone more sensitive than average seems to be susceptible this time. What will the next 24 hours bring?

It looks as though some colossal attack on the consciousness of Mankind is underway, but from where? No one seems to know who or what assails us. Even the world's great mystics are baffled.

Weird signs and sinister portents flood in from around the globe. Strange, impossible seismic events are happening under the polar icecap. A remote geological research station in Greenland starts picking up deep sonar readings from far beneath the polar sea that sound for all the world like the tolling of an enormous bell, somewhere in the frigid deeps. Then the research station goes suddenly silent, and can't be contacted again.

A ragtag fleet of vessels commandeered by Dr. Dagon's demented cult approaches the polar sea. A lot of them die or sink, for many of the craft they have seized are completely inappropriate for the conditions, but the rest press on, attacking anyone else who gets too close. Dr. Dagon

himself has vanished from his usual haunts and Captain Sinister seeks him frantically, desperate for an explanation. But it is too late for explanations. The stars are right. Dagon's master rises.

Crazed Cultist



PL: 2

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 2
Defense: 2 **Toughness Save:** 2
Fortitude Save: 2 **Reflexes Save:** 0
Willpower Save: 0

Skills: Bluff 5 (+4), Drive 2 (+2), Intimidate

5 (+4), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 2 (+2), Notice +2 (+4), Profession (Whatever they did before they joined the cult) 4 (+4), Search 4 (+6), Stealth 6 (+6)

Feats: Sneak Attack 2, Startle

Equipment: Huge Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage)

Complications: Will do anything to serve the will of Dagon's Master, including homicide or suicide.

2) The Stars Are Almost Right

Famed oceanographer Dr. Noah Arnulf descends into the frigid black waters beneath the polar ice in his one-man research submarine. He's down there to search for the elusive Greenland shark, but he finds something much huger, much hungrier and much worse. He somehow comes into contact with the mind of Dagon's Master.

He returns to the surface horribly changed, with deranged plans and terrible schemes roiling in his damaged mind. His crew thinks he's suffering from nitrogen narcosis, but when we doesn't stop raving about extradimensional horrors and Things That Shall Rule the Earth Again they decide that he's had a psychotic break and have him hospitalized once they put into port.

After six weeks in a mental ward Dr. Arnulf learns not to talk about things that make people think he's insane, and gets released. He is, however, no less crazy and evil than he was when they admitted him, and sets about to do the will of Dagon's Master. Weird and for the most part silent, he isn't really human inside anymore, but he can pass.

Eager to help his dread master, Dr. Arnulf leaves his terrified wife and sets off to examine volumes of secret and forbidden lore in private collections around the globe. Somewhere in these ancient books he hopes to find the way to wake the thing beneath the ice from its aeons of slumber. He's going to find it if he isn't stopped.

Dr. Arnulf has developed weird new powers of the mind, and he uses them to force his way in wherever he isn't willingly invited. This may draw the attention of mystically inclined PCs. So might stories of a crazed scientist in mismatched clothes,

frantically browsing all the most secret and dangerous libraries of the world for some kind of lost rite.

Otherwise, an evil sorcerer notices the alarming pattern of Dr. Arnulf's researches and comes to the PCs in a blind panic, begging for their help. We'll leave his (or her) identity up to the GM, so as to make it easier to fit into your campaign. This should be someone the PCs know is evil and preferably someone who they know is more powerful than they are. It should be really scary to see that they are afraid.

And there is good reason to fear. If Dr. Arnulf wakes Dagon's Master, the world will end and unclean gods will rule the cosmos. Which is what this sorcerer wants, of course—but Dagon's Master is the *wrong* unclean god.

Once the PCs are on the case, they will find that Dr. Arnulf's wife and colleagues are more than willing to talk about his strange behavior. Studying the books he has looked at (and his cryptic marginal notes) makes it only too clear what he is trying to accomplish. The stars are nearly right. All it will take is a single word to wake Dagon's Master. But this hellish, unthinkable word is inscribed in no book of this earth, or even of this universe. To find it, Dr. Arnulf will have to leave our dimension altogether.

As the PCs hunt for him, he is already constructing the machine that will take him beyond the veil. And there are frightening indications that as the PCs hunt for Arnulf, the dreaded Doctor Dagon is in turn hunting them.

Arnulf is presently living in the crawl spaces of a famous natural history museum, emerging at night to stalk its halls and acquire parts for his sinister machine. The PCs arrive at Arnulf's lair just a little too late to prevent his departure. They will have to pursue him across the dimensions, from one weird alien landscape to another. At the far end of things lies his destination—a dead planet circling a burnt-out star. On a mountainside above the titanic ruins left by some vanished civilization, the Unthinkable Word stands written in letters a thousand feet high.

If the PCs fail to catch up with Dr.

Arnulf before he learns the Word and returns to our reality, then Doctor Dagon is already waiting in the museum to clobber him. Dr. Dagon is supposed to be the one to wake his master up himself. Who is this Johnny-come-lately to steal the honor from him? In any case the stars aren't completely right, and he won't have some idiot like Noah Arnulf annoying his master by waking him up too soon.

Dr. Noah Arnulf

PL: 10

Str: 11 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 14 (+2)

Int: 15 (+2) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 8 (-1)

Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 5

Defense: 8 **Toughness Save:** 2

Fortitude Save: 4 **Reflexes Save:** 6

Willpower Save: 7

Skills: Bluff 8 (+7), Escape Artist 8 (+9), Gather Information 10 (+9), Intimidate 12 (+11), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 11 (+13), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 12 (+14), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 5 (+7), Profession (Scientist) 6 (+8), Notice 5 (+10), Search 5 (+10), Stealth 7 (+8)

Feats: Fascinate (linked to Bluff), Sneak Attack 4, Startle

Powers: Obscure 10 (Flaw: Partial), Telepathy 10 (Power Feats: Alternate Powers; Illusions [only affects living creatures], Mind Control, Stun, Mental Transformation [Can alter the target's memories but not their fundamental personality])

Complications: Willing Slave of Dagon's Master.

CHAPTER 4: TEAMS

THE POWER PONY POSSE

aka the Sisters of Science

Membership: Johnny Science, Boy Genius (eleven year old master of wonder-science), Power Pony Princess (Johnny's nine-year old sister Wendy, a silly, giddy child who can fly and flip over tanks, thanks to the wonderful Power Pony Power Powder her brother made for her), Shadow Girl— the Shadowy Girl of Shadows (Johnny and Wendy's five-year-old sister Kyra, who commands the darkness to obey her).

Background: Johnny Science, Boy Genius! Soon the world will know that name, and tremble in awe! But first, he has to figure out how to stop his pesky little sisters from bothering him all the time.

Not so much an actual supervillain team as a squabbling middle-class family, Johnny Science and his sisters, Power Pony Princess and Shadow Girl (the Shadowy Girl of Shadows!) live on a typical suburban street just like yours, or maybe slightly nicer. They are orphans, and have been adopted by a kindly black doctor and his wife, who make just a little more money than your family or mine, and have a somewhat bigger, nicer house. Johnny and his sisters love their new home, as well as their New Mom and New Dad. Johnny has a tree-house and a paper route, New Dad wears sweaters and smokes a pipe, New Mom bakes a lot when she isn't off shepherding some new piece of civil rights law through the courts.

Just a few months after moving in with Dr and Mrs. Jackson, Johnny

discovered that he has the paranormal power to do just about anything, so long as it takes the form of a science experiment. He has built ray guns out of water pistols and magnifying lenses, he made an invisibility formula with his chemistry set, he once built a time machine from a broken Speak-and-Spell and some Lego. Who knows what he might have been able to accomplish by now, if his little sisters Wendy and Kyra weren't constantly bugging him?

Wendy is nine, mildly hyperactive, and completely obsessed with a collectible card game and cartoon show that has to do with magical ponies. She thinks and speaks of nothing else, and she used to pester her older brother about it constantly, asking him for advice on the rules. Little Kyra is five and likes to break things. Neither one is good to have barging into your room while you're trying to invent things that might change the world.

A week ago Johnny decided to give his sisters superpowers so that they would stop interrupting his researches. This worked, but it's about to cause more trouble than ever.

Threat Level: Basically good kids, Johnny and his sisters wouldn't knowingly hurt anyone (well, perhaps Kyra would, but she's only five and doesn't understand). However, Wendy does not know the limit of her own strength and sees the world so completely through the lens of her TV show that she can easily be tricked into misbehaving. Johnny is plagued with bad luck. He constantly tries to help people but his efforts always seem to go badly wrong. He's accidentally unleashed more than one disaster on his quiet suburban neighborhood and while he feels terrible about it, this won't help anyone who gets caught in the next one. Kyra, as we mentioned, likes to break things and doesn't comprehend the

fact that people suffer when you break them.

Something more than just a menace to the neighborhood, their range is surprisingly great for a group of grade-school children, since Wendy can fly, Kyra can teleport and Johnny's amazing machines allow him to turn up just about anywhere.

They don't rob banks and they certainly have no ambitions of taking over the world. In fact they would try to stop anyone they saw attempt either one of those things. They would never take hostages and they wouldn't use force on someone to make them talk. When they come into conflicts with superheroes, it will be because of a misunderstanding or some awful new mishap in Johnny's treehouse lab.

Organization: Kyra generally does what Wendy tells her to do and Johnny has a lot of influence over both of them, though he seldom bothers to use it. Apart from that, they have no real organization. There is no leader and there are no by-laws to obey (apart from the endless, tedious rules of Wendy's game).

The group (if you can call it that) doesn't really have a name. Wendy sometimes remembers to call herself and Kyra the Power Pony Posse, but Johnny would never consent to being labeled with such a ridiculous title. We're calling them the "Sisters of Science" here largely as a matter of convenience.

Wendy and Kyra are generally but not always found together. Johnny is usually off on his own, unless the girls do something that gets his attention.

Tactics: Wendy fights fair, flying up to a target and hitting it after loudly announcing her intentions. Kyra does not fight fair, but her tactics are much the same.

Johnny is a gifted strategist, and could easily devise a good set of tactics for his sisters. Unfortunately, his battle plans are far too big and complex for his sisters to follow, so they would never be able to use them. On his own, Johnny is a wily, versatile opponent, although he'd rather flee or explain himself than fight.

Using the Sisters of Science in Your Campaign: Lighthearted comic relief with a dark undertone, adventures with Johnny Science and his sisters are usually very plot-dependant. Frankly they're not tough enough to be interesting opponents in a knock-down, drag-out fight, so it's always best if you embed them in some comic misadventure. See the enclosed plot seeds for the kinds of scenarios they work well with.

Most superheroes will come into conflict with them as a result of a misunderstanding or will join forces with them against some other menace, which makes it a little easier to deal with the ethical dilemmas of fighting grade-school kids.

There is a considerable amount of room to make the tone either darker or lighter. You can stress the amount of collateral damage a five-year-old parahuman like Shadow Girl causes, or use a plot where she isn't endangering any innocent bystanders at all. You can make Johnny comically preoccupied or genuinely tormented by his failure to use his gifts to help people. It will probably work best if their adventures are initially silly, but sometimes include a sudden unexpected note of pathos or realism.

Responsible PCs can attempt to rehabilitate or redirect the kids, with good results or comically screwed-up ones, just as the GM prefers.

For a really dark twist, let the Posse's secret origin come to light. Johnny doesn't know it yet, but his powers, and his sisters' are all the product of their minds. They have nothing to do with secret combinations of Power Pony Cards or even with science. All three Jackson children are the offspring of the notorious Nazi supervillain called Doctor Zed and they have inherited some fragment of his power.

The Doctor is still alive. He's eager to find his lost children—and eat them! Of course, when you look at Doctor Zed's own entry (on Page 219) you can see that he himself can be played as either broadly comic or hideously foul, depending on the GM's own style.

Adventures With the Sisters of Science: Power Pony Funtime Hour

The PCs suddenly encounter a mean, spoiled rich girl with thick ankles and a whining voice. Her name is Gisela Guerke. She begs them to protect her. She did a bad thing and she'll get punished if they don't protect her. She also threatens them a little, out of habit, but she's too scared to take much pleasure in it. She then tells them the whole story, whether or not they would like to hear it.

Gisela always lost at Power Pony Funtime Cards to Wendy Jackson, which isn't fair, because Wendy is three years younger than Gisela and thinks she's pretty and comes from a family that's much less important. So to make things fair Gisela had her father's accountant (who's good at figuring out rules) put all the rules on his computer and figure out how to win every time. He did, although it took him way too long and she had to yell at him a lot for being lazy. Then Gisela won a whole bunch of Wendy's cards from her.

But now she's heard that Wendy has learned the truth and she's going to come hurt Gisela real bad, or at least take all her cards back. The PCs have to protect her—Gisela's dad will make lots of trouble for them if they don't save her.

Wendy is indeed coming, and she's in fact mad. Her little sister Kyra has come along with her.

Power Pony Princess confronts Gisela and asks her how she could abuse the Power Pony Code so shamelessly. Return her cards at once, or face the power of the Ultimate Power Pony Powder Power! Gisela replies that she's not scared, she found these guys (the PCs) to beat Wendy up, and anyway her dad's accountant says Power Ponies are a stupid game, because the rules contradict themselves. Here she points out a long and rather tedious set of special clauses and exceptions in the card game's rules that does indeed contradict itself.

"But," Wendy cries in shock "that makes it impossible for anyone to ever actually achieve the Ultimate Power Pony Powder Power!" Then she vanishes like a soap bubble.

Kyra is really scared and bursts into tears. *"Shut up you brat!"* sneers Gisela. *"These guys are gonna beat you up!"*

"I'm not a brat!" Kyra wails *"I'm lost!"* And in fact she is. Kyra knows that her older brother Johnny would be able to bring Wendy back, if they could find him. But first they have to find him.

If the PCs can figure out where the Jacksons live, Shadow Girl will get Johnny down from his treehouse (he's more than a little nervous to see superheroes at his door) and he'll agree to help, provided Kyra doesn't come into his room for a week. Kyra has no idea how long a week is and no intention of keeping any such promise, so she cheerfully agrees.

Wendy must have vanished into the realm of Nowhere, Johnny says, where things that can't exist go. Fortunately there's a hole to Nowhere inside his treehouse. But Nowhere is a dangerous place, to judge from the horrible things that sometimes come crawling out of it, and he doesn't dare go there alone. Will the PC's help him voyage to the far side of infinity to help return his crummy sister?

In the meantime, Gisela is going to hire a supervillain to protect her cards.

Gisela Guerke

PL: 1

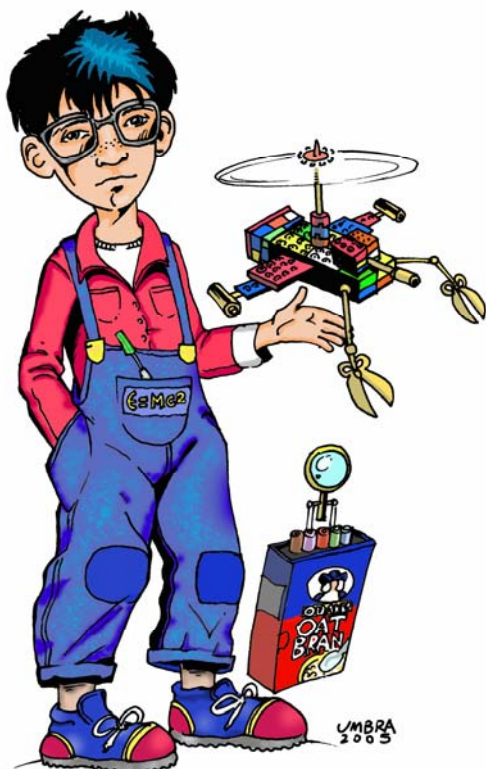
Str: 6 (-2) Dex: 14 (+2) Con: 10 (+0)
Int: 8 (-1) Wis: 12 (+1) Cha: 14 (+2)
Initiative: 2 Attack Bonus: 1 Defense: 1
Toughness Save: 0 Fortitude Save: 0
Reflexes Save: 2 Willpower Save: 1

Skills: Bluff 3 (+5), Intimidate 4 (+6)

Feats: Distract (linked to Intimidate)

Complications: Incapable of being pleasant, treats everyone badly whether they are being nice to her or not.

JOHNNY SCIENCE BOY GENIUS



"Science! Savior of Mankind, consolation of the world, why is it that even you cannot stop my bratty sisters from coming into my room?!"

Real Name: Jan Zeimann (but he thinks his name is Jonathan Jackson)

PL: 9

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 10 (+0) **Int:** 16 (+3) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10 (+0)

Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus (Melee):** 8

Attack Bonus (Ranged): 10 **Defense:** 8

Toughness Save: 0 **Fortitude Save:** 4

Reflexes Save: 2 **Willpower Save:** 9

Skills: Craft (Chemical) 14 (+17), Craft (Electronic) 14 (+17), Craft (Mechanical) 14 (+17), Craft (Structural) 14 (+17), Computers 10 (+13), Diplomacy 6 (+6), Disable Device 10 (+13), Knowledge (Earth Sciences) 10 (+13), Knowledge (Life

Sciences) 10 (+13), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+6), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 10 (+13), Knowledge (Technology) 14 (+17), Medical 5 (+8), Pilot 3 (+5)

Feats: Attack Focus (Ranged) 2, Beginner's Luck, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Minions (8 PL 1 robots who appear to be made out of Lego and Erector Set parts, with Tinkertoy components here and there), Skill Mastery 2 (Craft [Chemical], Craft [Electronic], Craft [Mechanical], Craft [Structural], Disable Device, Knowledge [Earth Sciences], Knowledge [Life Sciences], Knowledge [Popular Culture], Knowledge [Physical Sciences])

Equipment: Headquarters (see below for details), Darkvision Goggles, Microscopic Vision Eyepiece, Zap Gun (9 Stun), 75 points in robots or other gadgets, as plot needs arise.

Headquarters: Treehouse laboratory, far bigger on the inside than the outside, although this isn't obvious until you start exploring the different rooms and discover that there are too many of them and they just keep getting bigger the deeper you go. Size: Gargantuan, Hardness: 5, Features: Concealment (looks like an unusually large but otherwise normal treehouse from the outside), a Communications System (which appears to have been hastily built from a ham radio kit, yet can tap into anything up to and including classified spy satellite transmissions) a Computer (which looks like it has been spliced together from the guts of a 1990 Amiga, with videogame controllers from a Nintendo 64 and some components that clearly came from a Speak and Spell, yet which runs the whole complex competently enough), an automated Defense System (PL 9 Stun effect, with an Attack Bonus of 9, projected from what look like crudely modified plastic toy ray guns, which pop out of hidden trap doors on the side of the treehouse), Dimensional Portal leading who-knows-where (Super Movement 1: Dimensional Movement [only to one Dimension]; Extra: Portal; Flaw: Leads to a horrible place you wouldn't want to go, which awful things sometimes crawl out of) a Laboratory (ideal for the practice of Weird Science, even though most of its equipment

looks like it was improvised from construction toys or scavenged from a chemistry set), a Library (full of dubious books on Weird Science) an independant Power System (a fully functional Cold Fusion reactor, thrown together from vacuum cleaner hoses and lawnmower parts, with a central containment chamber that bears a disturbing resemblance to a box of Quaker Oats), a Security System which will cause a light to start flashing on Johnny's wristwatch if anyone tries to break into the treehouse while he is out, and of course a Workshop).

Background: A sober, unsmiling little boy who looks as though he bears the weight of the world on his narrow shoulders. Johnny Science appears to be about nine, but in fact he's eleven and small for his age. His eyes are weary and desperate behind his glasses. Blessed with the power of science, cursed with a pair of nosy, obnoxious little sisters, he feels pretty tormented for someone who has no serious problems.

Johnny doesn't remember anything before the age of six, when he and his two sisters were found wandering in the ruins of a burnt-out house of pancakes. The kids were passed around the foster care system for about four years, until through an incredible stroke of luck they were all adopted by a wealthy black couple in the suburbs. Johnny had been interested in science for as long as he could recall, and had a talent for tinkering with mechanical devices that had gotten him in trouble more than once.

He didn't so much identify with Einstein and Galileo as he did with Frankenstein and Vincent Price. He did want to invent incredible things that would make the world gasp in awe, but also to wander the crumbling battlements at midnight, unhappy, guilt-stricken and alone. He's managed to do a pretty good job of both, so far.

Last year Johnny's new Mom and Dad got him a chemistry set, and his troubles began in earnest. He was just messing around with the kit, trying to make a substance that would turn things invisible. The invisibility formula worked (even though it was just a useless mixture of methyl blue

and potash) and so did everything else he tried to make. Pretty soon he was manufacturing robots out of tinker toys and erector set parts, antigravity modules made out of Lego with bits from a broken Game Boy, death rays made from Quaker Oats boxes, magnifying lenses, D-cells and pipe cleaners (good thing New Dad smokes a pipe!) He made a go-kart that could fly. He built a device that would detect dimensional anomalies, and found one in his treehouse! But still his sisters would not stay out of his room! Worse, his creations have a bad habit of turning evil and running amok downtown.

An abortive effort to fight crime with his incredible machines went wildly askew, as did his effort to liberate money from a bank that was going to foreclose on the home of one of his schoolyard friends. Now he's a wanted criminal, or at least he thinks he is.

If superheroes were to come bursting into his treehouse laboratory he would assume they were here to throw him in jail, panic, and do his best to defeat them. Yet he would never knowingly use lethal force against them, and he would be terribly upset if any innocents got hurt—even his bratty sisters.

The treehouse itself is an amazing structure, vastly larger on the inside than the outside thanks to the handy dimensional anomaly he found. Yet even though it's the size of a small hotel, it all still appears to be made of wood, hammered together by an indifferent amateur. It's not obviously huge when you first squeeze into it. It's clearly a big treehouse, with multiple rooms—that much you can see even from the outside. But as you start exploring the various chambers you'll find that they just go on and on, getting bigger and weirder as you go deeper. Be warned, the lowest level contains all kinds of unpleasant things that Johnny has created but thought twice about unleashing on the world, as well as a black portal into nothingness that he calls "the Hole to Nowhere" which sinister creatures sometimes clamber out of.

Painfully earnest, with no sense of humor about himself, Johnny really, truly wants to use his incredible Wonder Science

to help people, but everything seems to go wrong every time he tries. This must be the fault of his sisters, he's convinced. Interfering with his researches at every opportunity. Barging into his room. Bugging him when he's trying to think.

A week ago he came up with a cunning plan to keep them out of his hair. He gave them both superpowers, and turned them loose to play. For days now they haven't bothered him, and he's been too lost in thought to notice that they've been wreaking havoc.

He is starting to wonder about the real source of his power. How can it be that *all* of his experiments work? Why is it that every device he tries to build, no matter how ludicrous, will function? Furthermore, if he is a super-genius, why is he getting a B in Math? Why is it that the other kids in the Gifted Class seem to be at least as smart as he is, if not smarter? He hasn't yet guessed the truth, namely that this isn't science at all. In fact Johnny and his sisters are the lost illegitimate children of the fiendish Doctor Zed (see his description on Page 219). Like his awful father, Johnny has the ability to distort reality. None of his machines really work—they're just animated by the power of his mind. If he were to die, they would all suddenly stop functioning.

But there is much worse news. Doctor Zed loves nothing more than to devour his children, whenever and wherever he can find them. Best of all he likes the ones with powers that resemble his own. Sooner or later, Johnny is going to have a serious problem on his hands. Let's hope he is prepared (or that the PCs have chosen this moment to invade his treehouse).

Adventures With Johnny Science, Boy Genius: 1) Cute Little Scumbly Eats Your Face



Something horrible crawls out of the dimensional anomaly in Johnny Science's treehouse. A tiny, nasty little thing, it lives to spread chaos and mayhem and it has the power to summon other transdimensional obscenities from beyond the void, some of them very large, unpleasant and hungry indeed. Unfortunately, the creature is also cute and adorable and worse, it resembles a character from the Pony Power Funtime Hour and Magical Friends—a show that Johnny's sister Wendy is obsessed with.

Johnny's sisters have made a pet out of the ghastly little monstrosity and call it "Little Scumbly" after the character from the show. They won't let anyone hurt their little Scumbly, no matter what kind of mischief he causes.

Johnny has actually constructed some equipment that can detect little Scumbly and send it back to whatever Hell it came from, but he's going to need some help to get past his sisters. In the meantime, his treehouse has become a very unsafe place to be. So has the whole neighborhood, in fact.

To get involved in this scenario, all the PCs have to do is to follow the trail of destruction and drooling extradimensional horrors to Johnny's house.

Nasty Thing From Nowhere

PL: 10

Str: 30 (+10) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 10
Defense: 8 **Toughness Save:** 10
Fortitude Save: 4 **Reflexes Save:** 3
Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Notice 6 (+6)

Feats: Fearsome Presence 8, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple

Powers: Additional Limbs 4 (10 of them), Flight 5 (Maximum Speed: 250 miles per hour), Immunity 15 (to Aging, Cold, Critical Hits, Fatigue, Heat, Illusions, Invisibility, Pressure, Radiation, Starvation, Suffocation 2, Vacuum), Protection 6, Super-Movement 3 (Dimensional Movement; can travel to a random selection of seemingly unrelated dimensions; Flaw: Unreliable Power [Only works occasionally, impossible to predict when it will or won't]), Super-Senses 8

(Acute Hearing, Blindsight, Darkvision, Infravision, Scent, Tracking, Ultravision)
Drawbacks: Hideous (moderate, very common)

2) Atomic Christmas

Johnny Science finds a giant robot, left over from some arch-villain's long-defunct evil scheme. It was called the "Atomic Satan" but with a small yet crucial modification to its program, Johnny converts it into an Atomic Santa! Equipping the robot with a hastily-prepared beard, Johnny sends his huge, jolly, terrifying atomic fat man into the poor part of town, where it can serve as a single giant Christmas present to everyone. It can prevent crimes, put out fires, pick up litter, help them build stuff, or whatever they want.

As a former orphan, it has always annoyed Johnny that in Santa's ledger poor kids are automatically naughty (they must be, since they get no presents) and rich kids are automatically nice. This is Johnny's chance to balance the scales. If the real Santa is going to ignore poor kids, then maybe they deserve a better one—an atomic Santa in fact! Once again, science makes a finer world for mankind.

Except of course that it doesn't work out that way at all. The local authorities panic when a gigantic, grinning round red robot comes lurching into the neighborhood, bellowing "*Merry Christmas! Ho ho ho! Have you been good?*" so loud that it makes the windows shake. Both the military and the Player Characters get called out to stop this giant atomic X-Mas marauder.

Atomic Santa will patiently explain why he's here and that he means no harm, but the authorities don't trust him and won't listen. One of the town fathers (a mean, plump little man named Lemuel P. Skrine) confides to the players that even if Atomic Santa is what he claims to be, it wouldn't be wise to give poor people that kind of encouragement.

Once the Army opens fire, Atomic Santa declares them naughty, and poor Johnny Science hasn't thought to disable its weapon systems! The merry old robot will defend itself vigorously, and the PCs may find them selves getting a dose of two-fisted

atomic wassail!

Atomic Santa

PL: 12

Str: 42 (+17) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** n/a
Int: n/a **Wis:** n/a **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus** (Melee): 0
Defense: 0
Toughness Save: 15 (12 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: n/a **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: n/a

Skills: Intimidate 12 (+20)

Feats: Distract, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Power Attack

Powers: Blast 10 (Extras: Area [20 foot burst radius]), Growth 12 (Size: Colossal; Grapple Modifier: 16; Stealth Modifier: -16; Intimidation Modifier: 8; Space: 30 feet; Reach: 15 feet; Extras: Innate, Flaw: Permanent), Immunity 30 (all Fortitude Effects), Protection 12 (Extra: Impervious)

Complications: Programmed to bring the joy of Christmas to all the good little boys and girls—and woe to any who stand in its way!

Power Pony Princess



"Prepare to taste the power of the Ultimate Power Pony Power Powder! Kyra, stop giggling! You're not doing it right!"

Real Name: Wendy Jackson
PL: 8

Str: 30/ 8 (+10/-1) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
Con: 26/12 (+8/+1) **Int:** 9 (-1)
Wis: 8 (-1) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus** (Melee): 7
Defense: 6
Toughness Save: 9 (Impervious)/1
Fortitude Save: 8/1 **Reflexes Save:** 2
Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+3), Bluff 9 (+12), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 12 (+11),

Perform (Dance) 1 (+4)

Feats: Improved Defense 2, Interpose, Quick-Change, Taunt

Powers: Flight 6 (Maximum Speed: 500 mph), Super-Strength 8 (Maximum Lift: 400 tons; Power Feats: Groundstrike, Shockwave, Super-Breath, Thunderclap)

Complications: Obsessed with the Power Ponies, sometimes forgets that they aren't real, especially while in her superhero identity.

Drawbacks: Normal Identity, Involuntary Transformation (she can only maintain her super-powers for about an hour after taking a dose of the Power Pony Power Powder—after this her powers are subject to sudden and unpredictable failure at any moment the GM choses)

Background: One of Johnny Science's rotten little sisters, Wendy is a distractable, silly, mildly hyperactive nine year old with the powers of a minor god.

Obsessed with a children's TV-show/collectible card-game called the "Pony Power Funtime Hour and Magical Friends", she lives as much in the imaginary world of the Power Ponies as she does in the real one. It is a complex world, full of rules and hierarchies, exceptions and special clauses. In fact the details are almost incomprehensible to anyone older than age 11, so we'll just note that involves ponies and a magical fairy princess who constantly trains them to achieve certain skills, so that they can compete with one another in a complicated series of tournaments and beauty pageants.

Wendy can have a hard time distinguishing between her game and reality, at least when she gets really worked up about it. This causes problems, since a couple of weeks ago she discovered that she can fly, outrace bullets and throw tanks around like toys.

She thinks that she gets her superhuman abilities from eating the magical powder that the Power Ponies use to achieve the Ultimate Power Pony Powder. In fact it's just a pixie stick that her older brother, Johnny Science, gave her, but it's a necessary psychological crutch for her superhuman abilities. She can only turn into

the Power Pony Princess for about an hour, after which she needs a new dose of Power Pony Power Powder. When she runs out, she'll ask her brother for more and he'll probably give it to her unless the PCs have explained to him that he shouldn't. With her little sister Kyra (Shadow Girl, the Shadowy Girl of Shadows) at her side, Wendy has been playing Power Pony Princess for real, causing huge amounts of property damage and random havoc in the process.

Little five-year-old Kyra is less ethical than Wendy, and constantly uses her own powers to act out and break stuff. This distresses Wendy, mostly because Kyra isn't playing the game right, but it also makes cops attack her little sister, who Wendy then has to defend. They haven't killed anybody or tangled with any superheroes yet, but then again they've only been at this for a week and a half.

A Player Character who comes to understand Wendy's motives could actually use the rules of her game against her, telling her that she couldn't do this thing or that because of some loophole in the rules. They could even whip out a Power Pony card that "defeats" her and makes her switch off her powers if they do it just right. This would however involve learning the rules of the game even better than she does, which is going to be both very difficult and very annoying. It is completely useless to try and tell her that a Power Pony Princess would never behave as badly and selfishly as she is doing. On their show the Power Ponies don't really spend any time trying to help people or show good citizenship—they're more interested in winning tournaments, beating their enemies and being the prettiest.

Wendy knows that her big brother Johnny is better at figuring rules out than she is, so she used to constantly pester him about the most effective strategies for using the collectible cards, whether this rule or that one ought to apply under certain special circumstances, what the most efficient way to train ponies with various special abilities might be, on and on until it pushed him to the very brink of madness.

In a desperate effort to stop her from coming into his room all the time, he

took a pixie stick, ran it through one of his machines, and announced that he had now made the Ultimate Power Pony Power Powder for real. Wendy whined and begged to have it, so he gave it to her in hopes that it would keep her distracted (little Kyra demanded that he give her super powers too, or she would tell on him, so he did).

It worked. His sisters haven't bothered him for almost two weeks. Lost in his researches, he hasn't had time to notice what they've been up to.

Adventures With Power Pony Princess: 1) Nerd of Tomorrow

A big, fat, untidy grown-up appears to Power Pony Princess in her room. He looks strangely familiar to her. He explains that he's her brother, Johnny Science, from the future. He desperately needs her help. In the future, he explains, aliens have landed and challenged the Earth to the ultimate Power Pony Battle Challenge, with the fate of the world at stake! But most of the earth's best power-pony cards were lost years ago. How can they possibly defend themselves against beings who know secret card combinations no human mind can even begin to comprehend? The future needs her cards!

Wendy believes him, but she doesn't want to give up any of her own cards, so instead she starts liberating them from card and comic shops across the city. Her fat companion tags along, encouraging her to grab other kinds of collectible cards as well, in case different aliens show up at some point.

This is probably how the PCs will encounter her, smashing her way into stores and making off with their cards. She is always careful to apologize, explain to the stores' owners why she needs the cards and that she'll bring them right back once she has saved the world with them. Make sure the PCs get to hear her say all this, so that they can follow the plot. Wendy and her pudgy associate never stay to fight, they're on a mission and they have no time to lose.

Meanwhile, the Johnny Science of our own epoch pursues his wayward sister with some of his incredible devices, intending to stop her rampage. He confronts

her just as the PCs do (preferably for the second or third time) and yells at her that she has to stop this. Wendy is initially too keyed-up and manic to listen, but if the PCs can restrain her Johnny will yell: *"That fat guy is lying to you! He can't be the real Johnny Science from the future!"*

"Huh?" Power Pony Princess replies *"but he looks so weirdly familiar—oh wait a minute, that's because he's that creepy fat guy who's always hanging around the comic book shop, Chester something. Hey! No fair! You made me steal!"*

Chester either tries to run or goes into a long-winded supervillain rant about how it was the perfect crime, how he would have gotten away with it if it weren't for you meddling fools, etc. Do whichever seems funniest. Either just before or just after fat evil Chester gets his clobbering, either he or Power Pony Princess will ask Johnny Science how he knew.

"Ha! That's so obvious!" Johnny splutters through his braces, *"I would never grow up to be a nerd!"*

Evil Chester

PL: 2

Str: 10 (+0) Dex: 10 (+0) Con: 14 (+2) Int: 14 (+2) Wis: 8 (-1) Cha: 8 (-1) Initiative: 0 Attack Bonus: 0 Defense: 4 Toughness Save: 2 Fortitude Save: 2 Reflexes Save: 2 Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Bluff 7 (+6), Craft (Electronics) 3 (+5), Intimidate 1 (+0), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+5), Notice 6 (+5), Performance (Acting) 7 (+6), Profession (Radio Shack Clerk) 3 (+5), Stealth 3 (+3)

Feats: Improved Defense, Master Plan

2) Nuclear Easter

It's springtime, and violence is in the air. Two little girls with superpowers clobber the Easter Bunny at a local mall. Witnesses report that were yelling *"No! This madness has to stop! You're only hurting yourself!"*

Once they realized that this "bunny" was just a terrified minimum wage employee in a pink rabbit suit, they apologized and left. Perhaps they were looking for the real Easter Bunny?

If the PCs decide to stake-out malls and other venues where Easter bunnies are

said to appear, to prevent any further holiday mayhem, they don't have long to wait. Power Pony Princess and Shadow Girl, the Shadowy Girl of Shadows, will turn up at the first place the PCs stake out with looks of grim determination on their little faces.

When they see the Player Characters, Power Pony Princess is willing to talk to them instead of beating up the poor drudge in the dingy rabbit suit, but Shadow Girl will have to be restrained. Wendy will ask the PCs if that's the real Easter Bunny and if it's not, do they know where to find him? It's very important that they talk to him, before things get any worse.

If the PCs sensibly ignore this anti-Easter crime wave, deciding that some crimes are probably best left unsolved, they get embroiled in the whole bad business anyway—Wendy and Kyra present themselves to the PC and ask if they know where to find the Easter Bunny. The real one, with all the mutations and deformities.

If the PCs ask them what this is about, they will gladly explain. Last year, not long after they moved in with Dr. and Mrs. Jackson, Wendy asked her older brother Johnny about Easter. What does a guy coming back from the dead have to do with jellybeans, and rabbits made of chocolate, and baskets full of caramel eggs and fake plastic grass?

Johnny soberly replied *"A long time ago, there was a bunny. He was much worse than other bunnies—he was larger, for one thing. And much more hideously mutated. All the other bunnies hated and feared him, and the poor hulking monstrosity somehow got it into his deformed head that he could make people like him if he went around on Easter and hid brightly colored eggs here and there, and gave people sickeningly sweet candy and baskets full of horrible fake cellophane grass that resembles no grass of this earth. Of course it didn't work and all the other bunnies loathe and dread him to this day—but that only makes him try harder. They say that on certain black midnights in April you can still hear him out there...hippety... hoppity, scrape! Hippety... hoppity, scrape! I suppose I should feel sorry for him, but it's difficult, because he's a loathsome freak."*

That night, Wendy explains, she heard a colossal hopping sound come down the hall and she hid under the covers. But sure enough, in the morning she found—an Easter basket! She ate the candy, although she wept at every bite.

But that was before she and Kyra had superpowers. Now they can stop this awful cycle before it continues for another year! Kyra nods vigorously. *"Poor old bunny,"* she says *"let's beat him up!"*

If the PCs want to talk to Johnny Science about this matter, he confesses that the whole story is—true! Horribly, horribly true! That rabbit was one of his first experiments and one of his worst mistakes. But in fact, Wendy and Kyra don't have to worry about it anymore, he captured the beast himself with a big net and some genetically modified carrots. He takes his sisters and the Player Characters deep into his treehouse to see for themselves.

But when the Easter Bunny sees the jellybeans that Kyra has thoughtlessly brought with her, the brute grows frenzied and snaps its chains. The PCs and the Sisters of Science may be able to recapture it, but in all likelihood it will go hopping off into the night, with its basket clutched under one misshapen arm, casting a gigantic shadow on the moon.

Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 12
Defense: 8
Toughness Save: 18 (14 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 18 **Reflexes Save:** 0
Willpower Save: 8

Skills: Intimidate 5 (+11), Notice 3 (+8), Stealth 17 (+1)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Fearsome Presence 6, Improved Overrun, Power Attack, Startle

Powers: Growth 12 (Size: Gargantuan; Grapple Modifier: 12; Stealth Modifier: -12; Intimidation Modifier: 6; Space: 20 feet; Reach: 15 feet; Extras: Innate, Flaw: Permanent), Immunity 9 (Life Support), Impervious Toughness 14, Leaping 12, Super-Senses 4 (Darkvision, Scent, Tracking)

Equipment: Easter Basket (melee weapon, 5 Damage), Brightly Colored Eggs (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage), Jelly Beans (Ranged Weapon, 2 Damage)

Drawbacks: Hideous (Looks like it used to be a bunny—but is now something far, far worse!)

The Easter Bunny



PL: 15

Str: 46 (+18) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 46 (+18)
Int: 6 (-2) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 10 (+0)

SHADOW GIRL,

THE SHADOWY GIRL OF SHADOWS



***"Grrr! I make the scary shadow!
Scary! (giggle!)"***

Real Name: Kyra Jackson

PL: 7

Str: 6 (-2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 10 (+0)
Int: 8 (-1) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus** 9 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 7 (0 without force field)
Fortitude Save: 0 **Reflexes Save:** 2
Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Bluff 2 (+6), Stealth 6 (+8)

Feats: Attractive (cute and adorable), All-Out Attack, Improved Defense 2, Power Attack, Quick-Change

Powers: Darkness Control 7 (Alternate

Powers: Animate Shadows, Drain Strength, Force Field, Snare, Telekinesis, Teleport [Medium: Shadows; Range; 700 feet; Extended Range 200 miles; Power Feats: Change Direction, Change Velocity, Easy, Turnabout; Extras: Accurate), Super-Senses 4 (Blindsight, Darkvision)

Drawbacks: Disabled (just a little girl, only moves half the speed of an adult, can't reach things on high shelves, figure out complicated machines, drive a car, etc.; Common, Moderate)

Background: The five-year-old mistress of shadows. She plays the Power Pony Funtime Hour and Magical Friends game with her big sister, breaks stuff and makes scary shadows. The game has lots of rules, and Kyra doesn't really understand it, but it's fun and lots of stuff gets broken and she gets to play with her big sister Wendy and sometimes stay up late. When she gets tired of the game or when Wendy won't play with her she goes off and plays by herself, causing chaos and mayhem and making the people run. She has absolutely no idea how bad this is, or that it will make superheroes come and try to hurt her.

Not an especially bright little girl, excitable and prone to break things, Kyra makes havoc partly because she finds the noise and motion stimulating, but mostly just to see what it would look like. She is exploring the limits of her strange new powers and finds it irresistible to test them. While her sense of morality is no more developed than you'd expect for a five-year-old (or perhaps slightly less), she genuinely isn't evil.

Kyra is one of Johnny Science's rotten little sisters. She was constantly bothering him, interfering with his researches, getting underfoot when he tried to go on missions and trying to get into his room. To distract her, he taught her how to command the power of shadows, and sent her off to play with her big sister Wendy. This worked pretty well—his sisters haven't bothered him for more than a week now.

Too preoccupied to read the papers or watch the news, he has no idea what kind of games they've been playing. He has wondered why her powers took such a

different form than Wendy's, but his own psychological weaknesses keep him from guessing the truth. Namely that all three of them are the illegitimate children of one of the most powerful and terrible superhuman criminals of the age, and that they have all inherited his ability to bend reality to their will. See the entry on Doctor Zed, the Martian Maneater (Page 219) for all the awful details.

Dealing with Shadow Girl poses certain ethical challenges for most superheroes. It's an even bigger legal mess. Too young to be sent to prison, her adoptive parents would normally be held liable for her actions. But how can they be? They weren't in a position to stop her or even to know what she was doing.

A superhero's best option is probably to try to reason with her and to explain that she is causing real people actual pain. Talking to her sister might help, too, if they can get her to calm down long enough.

If this fails (and it probably will) then their best option is to go talk to Johnny Science, Boy Genius and explain to him that his attempt to keep his nosy sisters out of his hair has had grievous unexpected consequences. He will be properly shocked and dismayed and will try to take Kyra's powers away from her, which will of course cause a huge fight.

He really can permanently remove Kyra's shadow-manipulating abilities, just by convincing her that he's taken them away and that they won't work anymore. However, he doesn't know that this is how it works. He will need to subdue her, put her in one of his ridiculous machines, flip some switches, turn some dials, make some weird lights and noises and so forth. If he can get her to hold still for long enough, the whole process takes about thirty seconds.

Not that this has to be the end for Shadow Girl. As time goes on and Kyra grows older, there is practically no limit to the kinds of weird new powers she might eventually develop. How she winds up using them may have a lot to do with what she remembers about her first encounter with superheroes.

Adventures With Shadow Girl, the Shadowy Girl of Shadows: 1) Inane Clown Frenzy

To help Shadow Girl get over her crippling fear of clowns, Power Pony Princess takes her to a clown convention. As Shadow Girl goes berzerk on the convention floor, her sister flies above the panicked mob of screaming clowns and yells *"don't worry, we're just here to help her overcome her crippling fear of clowns. Now everyone play along and act scared. Ooh! Good job! You're doing really well!"* Make sure the PCs arrive in time to hear her say that.

If the PCs try to reason with Wendy and explain that these clowns aren't pretending, they really are scared, then she'll apologize and try to take Kyra home. She'll even try to say she's sorry to the clowns. Unfortunately, Kyra is having too much fun and doesn't want to go.

To make matters worse, a gang of lawless, care-for-nothing, violent misfit clowns called the Rubber Pants Bunch show up, and decide to give poor little Shadow Girl a ferocious paddling. These outlaw clowns (or "one-percenters" as most clowns call them) will drive through the crowd in their tiny car, adding to the general mayhem, until they get close to Shadow Girl's position and all pile out *en masse*, hankering for a spanking.

Confused, Power Pony Princess thinks that the PCs have sent in the clowns on her little sister and everyone starts hitting everyone in the middle of the crowded convention hall, with hundreds of terrified innocent bystanders stumbling around in their giant shoes.

The Rubber Pants Bunch

PL: 2

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 8 (-1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 6 **Attack Bonus:** 2 **Defense:** 2
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 4 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Acrobatics 5 (+7), Intimidate 7 (+9), Performance 3 (+5), Sleight of Hand 5 (+7)

Feats: Improved Initiative, Redirect, Sneak Attack, Stunning Attack, Startle

Equipment: Paddle (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Weird Little Car (Vehicle; Size: Medium; Strength 10, Speed 3, Defense 8, Toughness 3)

Complications: Depraved Clown.

King Klown (Leader of the Rubber Pants Bunch)

PL: 4

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 8 (-1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 6 **Attack Bonus:** 4 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 4 **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 4 **Willpower Save:** 4

Skills: Acrobatics 5 (+7), Escape Artist 5 (+7), Intimidate 9 (+11), Performance 5 (+7), Sleight of Hand 6 (+8)

Feats: Improved Initiative, Redirect, Sneak Attack, Stunning Attack, Startle

Complications: Even more depraved clown.

2) "The Better to Beat You With, My Dear..."

A nervous, timid werewolf named Myron Titcomb approaches the Player characters. He dreads speaking to strangers but he's desperate for help.

Myron lives with his grandmother at a house in one of the last undeveloped parts of the suburbs. Townhouses are creeping up on all sides of their little patch of woods, and until a few days ago Myron thought that was his biggest problem.

He knows he's not supposed to turn into a wolf, it's been his family's secret shame for years, but on this last night of the full moon he couldn't resist any longer. It was great!

He chased dogs around the neighborhood and then the dogcatcher

chased him. It was the most fun he'd had since they canceled that last Star Trek series. But then, as he was going home, a horrible little girl started following him. She was made out of shadows, and she wanted to play with him.

He didn't like the look of her at all and he ran away. But she's found him again twice since then. She says she wants him to turn into a wolf so she can play the "I beat you up" game with him.

Myron is paralyzed with fear. He wants to hide under his bed and never leave the room again, but what if the little girl comes into the house and harms his grandma? She's really old and sick (actually she's a vigorous and hearty sixty-five, but a bit of a hypochondriac) and she can't take much excitement. Plus she'll be really mad if she finds out that Myron was turning into a wolf and running around the neighborhood without his clothes on.

But tonight, when he came home from his job (he's a part-time janitor down at the Snacktastic Candy Company) he saw weird shadows moving around inside the windows of his house. The bad little girl must be in there! What has she done to his grandma? Myron knows that changing into a wolf is wrong, he promises not to do it again, but the PCs have got to help him!

If they agree to come over to his house and make sure everything is okay, they find that Shadow Girl, the Shadowy Girl of Shadows, is hiding in Myron's grandmother's bed, crudely impersonating her. Grandma herself is fine—she's at her Pilates class, but Myron doesn't know this.

Myron stammers that she can't be his grandma, her eyes are too big (*"the better to shoot eye-beams at you with, my dear"* Shadow Girl says, and giggles) her legs are too short (*"the better to stomp you with, my dear"*) and that his grandma doesn't carry a whiffle bat around with her (*"the better to **BEAT YOU UP WITH!!!**"*)

Fun and havoc ensue. Myron screams, turns into a wolf and runs frantically around the room in a blind panic while Shadow Girl giggles and slams on him with her powers and the whiffle bat. If the PCs don't put a stop to this nonsense in time, Grandma comes home, looks at her

bed, demands to know who's been sleeping in it and who ate her damn malt-o-meal.

When she sees what's going on she loses her temper and turns into a big, grouchy old she-bear. For this is why Myron's family disapproves of his turning into a wolf—he's had the bad luck to be the only werewolf born into a family of werebears.

Shadow Girl will shriek and run for it, while Grandma beats on poor Myron (for making a mess, dragging strangers into her house and turning into a wolf instead of a bear) and chases the PCs out of her house with snarls and blows.

Myron Titcomb

PL: 5

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 26 (+8)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus** 2 **Defense:** 5
Toughness Save: 8 (5 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 8 **Reflexes Save:** 0
Willpower Save: 0

Skills: Notice 4 (+4), Stealth 4 (+4)

Feats: Elusive Target, Improved Defense 2, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Quick-Change, Track

Powers: Impervious Toughness 5, Strike 3 (Extra: Mighty), Super-Senses 4 (Low-Light Vision, Scent, Tracking, Ultra-Hearing)

Complications: Nervous, meek, easily frightened ravening man-beast.

Drawbacks: Involuntary Transformation (whenever he panics), Major Vulnerability (Silver Weapons)

Myron's Grandma

PL: 10

Str: 22 (+6) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 24 (+7)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 6 **Attack Bonus** (Melee): 11
Attack Bonus (Ranged): 9 **Defense:** 9
Toughness Save: 10 (7 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 10 **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: 5

Skills: Intimidate 8 (+9), Notice 10 (+11), Profession (Stevedore's Union Rep) 10 (+10), Search 8 (+9), Survival 10 (+11)

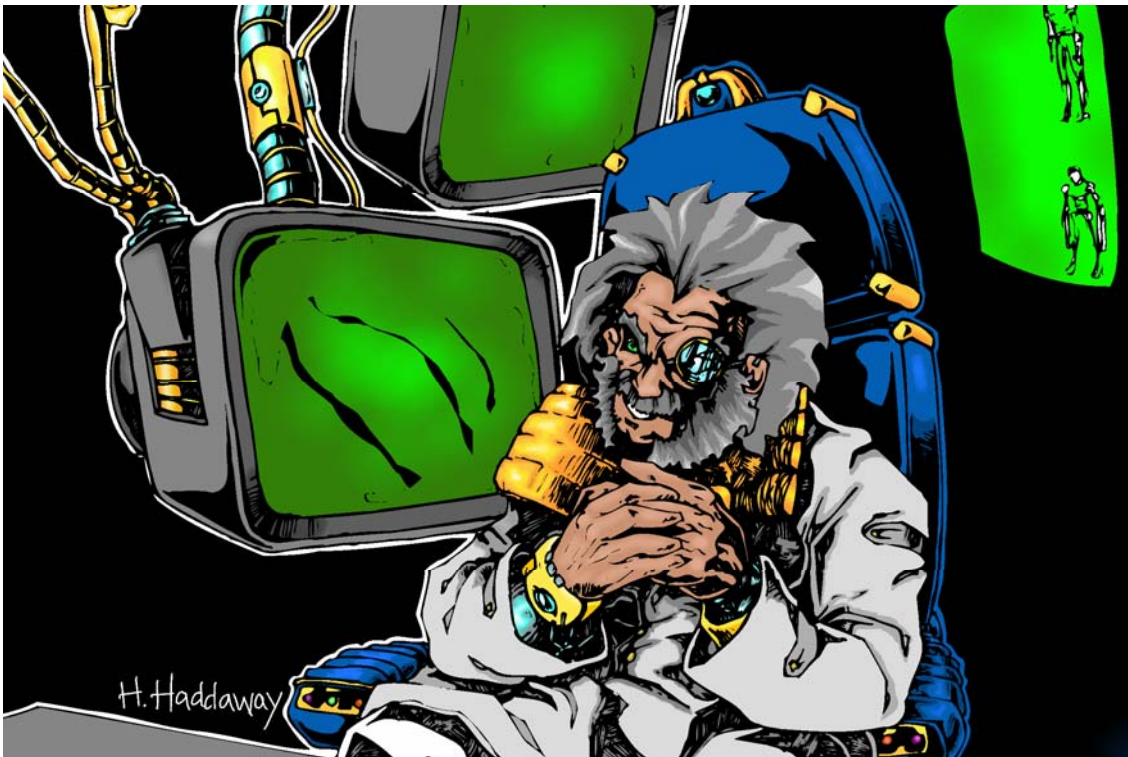
Feats: Attack Focus (Melee) 2, Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Startle, Tracking

Powers: Regeneration 26 (+10 to Constitution Checks to recover from damage, makes rolls to recover from being Injured, Staggered or Disabled once per round), Strike 4 (Extra: Mighty), Super-Senses 4 (Low-Light Vision, Scent, Tracking, Ultra-Hearing)

Complications: Grouchy, cantankerous old ravening she-beast

Drawbacks: Major Vulnerability (to Silver Weapons)

DR. ROBOT



"Soon the world will tremble at the might of Doctor Robot! I'm sorry dear, was that too scary? There, there—don't cry. It's all right, it's just pretend, you know."

Real Name: Doesn't have one and has never wondered why.

PL: 8

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** -
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 10 **Fortitude Save:** n/a
Reflexes Save: 3 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Bluff 8 (+10), Computers 11 (+15),

Craft (Electronic) 13 (+17), Craft (Mechanical) 13 (+17), Craft (Structural) 13 (+17), Disable Device 11 (+15), Escape Artist 6 (+9), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 13 (+17), Knowledge (Technology) 13 (+17), Notice 5 (+5), Search 5 (+5), Stealth 5 (+8)

Feats: Eidetic Memory, Equipment 25, Improved Dodge 2, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Master Plan, Minions 15 (up to 15 PL 1 Robots of various types), Sidekicks (up to five PL 7 robots of various types), Skill Mastery (Computers, Craft [Electronic], Craft [Mechanical], Craft [Structural])

Powers: Device (Eyepiece, Hard to Lose; Powers: Super-Senses [Darkvision,

Infravision, Microscopic Vision, Ultravision]], Immunity 30 (All Fortitude Effects), Protection 10

Equipment: 75 points or so in Constructs, 2 or three spare Headquarters (see below for details), Repair Kit

Headquarters: A typical Doctor robot facility is a sprawling underground complex with its own Communication System, a Computer, Concealment, Holding Cells designed especially for Johnny Science and his nosy sisters, a Laboratory, Living Space for Doctor Robot and up to seven guests, and a fully equipped robotic Workshop)

Complications: Compulsive ranter, will keep holding forth about his own greatness long after it's time to stop talking and start fleeing. Could never hurt an innocent. Never carries a weapon.

Background: Silly, childish, irresponsible maker of robot toys. No one knows where he comes from or how he has the money to build all those robots. He claims that the scientific world rejected his theories, called him a madman and hounded him out of his career because they feared his genius. But this simply isn't true. There is no record of any such roboticist getting drummed out of the scientific community, he hasn't published any books or papers. In fact there is no record of him at all prior to his career as a supervillain (which began about two months ago). Anyway the story he tells about his origins is completely different each time he tells it. The truth is that he doesn't know who or what he is himself. Nor has he ever given the question much thought.

He commits crimes for kicks and to get attention. He does sometime steal things (usually big diamonds or famous works of art) but he's even more prone to vandalism and to disrupting stuffy social events full of rich, dignified-looking people. He doesn't care about money. If he tries to make off with the crown jewels it's only because he loves watching everyone rush around trying to stop him.

A deplorable ham, he loves being a master criminal and revels in all the cheesy clichés of the archetype. Despite his protestations, he even likes the part where the heroes catch him and drag him away to

jail, since it allows him to scream *"I'll get you next time!"* He doesn't hold grudges against heroes who beat him fairly, although he will claim to. If a hero turns out to be a good playmate, lets him hold forth with his screechy rants and doesn't humiliate or brutalize him too badly, he'll want to be their arch-nemesis. From then on he'll send robots to plague them at every opportunity. While he loves to put heroes in silly deathtraps, he wouldn't actually kill or cripple his arch-nemesis, for then where would he find another one?

Oddly asexual, uninterested in women (or men) as anything but hostages, he has a limited, incomplete personality. He loves children (in fact he sort of is one) and would never let a child come to harm. Grown-ups are another matter. While he doesn't normally use lethal attacks, he might do an adult serious harm if he were cornered. Or he might do it in a fit of childish pique.

He also reacts badly to heroes who do him serious, unnecessary bodily harm or interrogate him too brutally. That's outside the limits of the game, and he may well become unexpectedly savage to keep them from capturing and abusing him again. He won't try to hunt them down and take revenge—he wants to avoid people who scare him, not seek them out, but he'll do whatever it takes to stay out of their clutches if they come after him a second time.

He most certainly will take hostages if he gets a chance, but it's almost always a bluff—he won't normally harm them (but see above). Sometimes, if a job goes badly, he'll get really depressed and drop out of sight for a long time, holed up in one of his secret lairs, speaking only to his robots and eating too much ice cream to cheer himself up.

Who is Doctor Robot, really? He's a robot himself—the first one Johnny Science ever built. This self replicating, self-improving machine constructed bigger and bigger bodies for itself, with more and more complex elements. It programmed itself with some memories and behavior patterns, all modeled on Johnny's expectations about what such an entity would be like.

Like the rest of Johnny Science's creations, Doctor Robot is fueled by the power of his mind (Johnny unconsciously wanted an arch-nemesis, so he built himself one) and would suddenly cease to function if Johnny were to die or permanently lose his powers.

While Doctor Robot is totally obsessed with being Johnny Science's nemesis, another more glamorous hero could distract him. If this happens Johnny will find himself inexplicably jealous and hurt, even though he views Doctor Robot as annoyance who wastes his time.

Johnny has tried to play Wendy and Kyra off against Doctor Robot, but to his exasperation they refuse to believe that he really exists.

Adventures With Doctor Robot: 1) An Idiot as Big as the Ritz

While the PCs are tracking down some other villain, completely unrelated to the Sisters of Science, Johnny Science presents himself to them and says that he has crucial information. Make sure Johnny does this at an inconvenient moment and that the Player Characters don't yet know he's an authentic parahuman gadgeteer. He is carrying some ridiculous devices that he's clearly put together out of Lego and an Erector set.

Johnny insists that he's following the same trail of clues as the PCs, that he's decided to become a hero of science, just like them, and that all the signs point to this being the work of his arch-nemesis—the fiend they call Doctor Robot! Johnny is wrong, but unbeknownst to the PCs, Doctor Robot is not just a figment of Johnny's overheated imagination.

Have Johnny Science pop up once or twice more over the course of the adventure, claiming (long after the PCs know otherwise) that Doctor Robot is behind everything, and that all the signs indicate he intends to steal a massive diamond (called the "Star of Moldavia") when it goes on display at the city museum. The last time the PCs encounter Johnny, he is accompanied by his little sisters. They groan and roll their eyes when he starts talking about Doctor Robot *"Not that game again"* Wendy moans. *"Mister"* she says to

one of the PCs *"don't listen to him. Doctor Robot's not real, it's just this game he made up."*

"Can we play Power Pony Princess and Shadow Girl instead?" Kyra whines.

Johnny gets so embarrassed and angry that he turns bright red and leaves, followed by his sisters.

Then the Star of Moldavia goes on display at the city museum. And Doctor Robot attacks the reception. Both Johnny Science and the PCs will arrive to stop him, and possibly Power Pony Princess and Shadow Girl as well. Doctor Robot is in fine form, cackling and raving and spilling gooey things on uptight wealthy dowagers.

If he does manage to defeat the PCs (and with a room full of hostages he might well accomplish it) then before he leaves he will throw the diamond to Johnny Science. *"Here,"* he says *"You may as well give it back. I really just wanted to defeat you. What on earth would I do with an enormous diamond?"*

Unfortunately, the SWAT team arrives at this moment and they mistake poor Johnny for the thief. He lets go of the diamond and tries frantically to escape, perhaps with the PCs' assistance.

2) Ridiculous Robot Rampage

After clashing with the PCs a few times Doctor Robot becomes fixated on one of them, and will do his best to make himself their arch-enemy. Every time they make a public appearance, some of his robots show up and try to disrupt it, throwing pies at the Mayor as the PC is being given the key to the city, snatching the lady reporter who is trying to interview the PC and carrying her screaming up the side of a building, hurling gallons of non-dairy whipped-topping at the fans standing in line to have the PC sign their comic books. The rampaging robots never hurt anyone seriously, and in fact they're having a positive effect on the PC's public image, providing ready-made photo opportunities for them to show off their heroism.

The first time the robots attack, Dr. Robot has one of his machines deliver a pompous, threatening pre-recorded message, in which he says that he and the

PC have always been each others' greatest foes (this isn't true, in fact the PC never even heard of Doctor Robot before the last eight weeks) and that he will make the PC's life a living hell until they acknowledge his mastery, (whatever that means). *"Mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha!"*

Johnny Science, meanwhile, feels strange, conflicted and jealous about these developments. He has also noticed how much the PC is benefiting from Doctor Robot's attentions, and certain suspicions have begun to occur to him. He confronts the Player Character and shyly points out that he knows Dr. Robot can't really be his arch nemesis—he only first appeared two months ago. Johnny adds that he's noticed the way the PC's reputation has been improved by his new enemy, and how the robots only ever seem to attack when the cameras are on. If it's just the two of them, here alone, will the PC promise Johnny that this is all above-board, that they haven't made some kind of secret deal with Doctor Robot?

Johnny is satisfied by the PC's answer. Unfortunately, there are members of the press who are starting to ask themselves the same questions and they won't be as easily fobbed off. Soon the PC is publicly accused of colluding with a supervillain. Johnny Science is filled with shame, and although he wants to believe in the PC he is losing his faith in them.

Just as the PC's reputation really starts to suffer, they get a solid lead on the location of Doctor Robot's secret lair (it's under an old boarded up "Science-Burger" fast food restaurant in a bad neighborhood). The Player Characters break in the door and fight their way past his robots, only to find Johnny Science doing the exact same thing. Confronting Doctor Robot in his workshop, Johnny cries out in consternation *"But I thought I was your greatest nemesis!"*

Dr. Robot suddenly looks ashamed. *"You're right Johnny" he says, "How could I have been so blind as to believe in this scoundrel—have you read the papers, they say he's been caught colluding with some supervillain or other, just to help inflate his reputation. Even I think that's low."*

A huge fight ensues, Doctor Robot

is defeated, the PC's reputation is saved and the villain is kind enough to yell, *"I'll get you, Johnny Science, I'll get you if it's the last thing I do!"* as he's being dragged away.

Johnny chokes back a tear. *"Thank you."* He says, *"Thank you Doctor Robot, I'll get you too."*

Doctor Robot's Fiendish Creations

While he seems to have a different specialized robot for every occasion, and is forever devising unique models for special purposes, here are three standard types he uses again and again.

Crime-Bot



PL: 1

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** -
Int: - **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** -
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 1 **Defense:** 0
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** n/a
Reflexes Save: 0 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Notice 1 (+4), Search 1 (+4)

Feats: Fearless, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple

Powers: Communication 1 (Radio), Immunity 30 (All Fortitude Effects), Protection 2, Super-Senses 3 (Darkvision, Radio)

Complications: Stupid.

Background: A standard-model crime-bot, this rickety-looking, cheaply-made mechanical man forms the backbone of Dr. Robot's troops. He never turns up at the scene of any crime without at least three of these flimsy, high-useless henchmen at his side. Crime-Bots are none too bright, and have to be ordered around almost constantly to keep from making foolish mistakes.

Synthetic Friend



PL: 7

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** -
Int: - **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 7 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 7 (2 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: n/a **Reflexes Save:** 3
Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+9), Bluff 7 (+10), Disguise 12 (+15), Notice 5 (+4), Performance (Acting) 12 (+15), Performance (Dance) 5 (+8), Performance (Singing) 8 (+11)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, Attractive, Distract (Linked to Bluff), Fascinate (linked to Performance: Singing), Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Takedown Attack

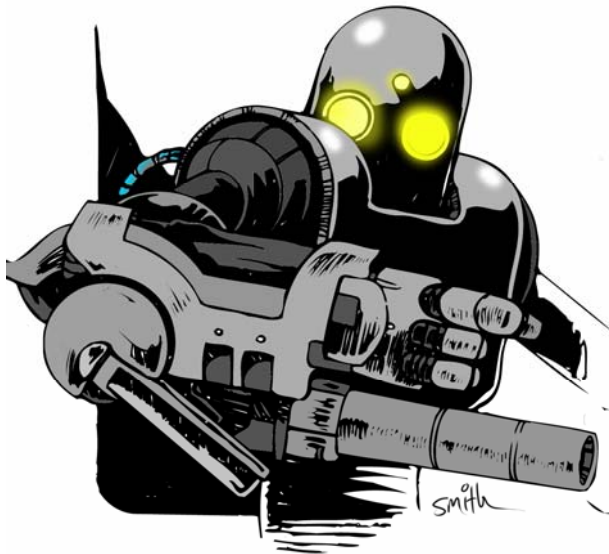
Powers: Immunity 30 (All Fortitude Effects), Protection 7 (2 Impervious), Strike (electric shock) 7, Super-Senses 1 (Ultra-Hearing)

Background: Used for infiltration and spying—also to keep Doctor Robot company by telling him jokes and stories. They actually have the capacity to pass themselves off as human with a successful Disguise roll. This won't fool most superheroes for long. Their behavior is still

oddly mechanical while they're in disguise and they have to make constant Bluff rolls to maintain a convincing façade.

It doesn't appear to have ever occurred to Dr. Robot to strike up a romance with one or another of his Synthetic Friends (although they would certainly oblige him if he asked) or for that matter with anyone else.

Grievous-Bodily-Harm-Bot



PL: 7

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** - **Int:** -
Wis: 8 (-1) **Cha:** -
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 8
Defense: 5
Toughness Save: 9 Impervious
Fortitude Save: +n/a **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Notice 1 (+0)

Feats: Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Power Attack

Powers: Blast 7, Communication 2 (Radio), Immunity 30 (All Fortitude Effects), Protection 9 (Extra: Impervious), Super-Senses 4 (Blindsight [Radar], Radio, Ultra-Hearing), Snare 7, Super-Strength 3 (Maximum Lift: 6 tons)

Background: Used for exactly what the name says, although Dr. Robot probably wouldn't let things get so badly out of control that they'd actually do grievous

bodily harm to anybody. Also useful for breaking into bank vaults and out of prison—ideal for those hard-to-reach places.

Other Common Types of Robots

Scutbot

Scutbots are mobile cleaning units that can perform simple tasks when asked. They have a defense of 0, 1pt of Impervious Protection and can't really attack anything. A Scutbot can be used to perform any physical skill at a distance, although it takes twice as long as performing the skill normally would, and suffers a -4 penalty. Since they don't have Radio and have to be ordered around by voice, it's hard to see why Doctor Robot bothered to invent them—but then again that's true of so many of his creations that it seems almost pointless to mention it.

Automatic Chauffer

More of a gadget than a separate construct, these devices consists of nothing but 5 points of Driving or Pilot skill, built into a briefcase-sized device than can be placed on the seat of a vehicle and instructed to drive it. If it isn't told a specific destination it will simply drive around at random, following the rules of the road until it is instructed to do otherwise or the vehicle runs out of fuel. An Automatic Chauffer will respond to verbal commands and can receive radio signals, or be commanded via cell-phone. The device can't attack anything directly. It has a Defense of 0 and a Toughness Save of 0.

Sneak-Bot

A Tiny flying camera, it has a Defense of 12 and a Toughness Save of 0. The Sneak-Bot has a Stealth Skill of 6 (Counting its bonus for being Tiny). It would frankly be a lot more inconspicuous if Dr Robot hadn't given it a garish pop-art paint job and programmed it to constantly mutter to itself. No doubt he had his reasons.

The Ghost and the Phantom

Membership: The Steel Phantom (once East Germany's greatest super-agent, now embittered and bewildered by a world that has forgotten Leninism), The Iron Ghost (once China's greatest super-agent, now embittered and bewildered by a world that has forgotten Maoism).

Background: Weird times make for weird bedfellows. Once mortal foes, the Steel Phantom and the Iron Ghost have now become a team. No one could be more surprised at this than they are. But for both of them, these are the weirdest times imaginable.

East Germany was the most rigidly Stalinist state in the whole Warsaw Pact. Even the Soviet Union wasn't as strict and repressive. Their premier spy was the masked midnight marauder known as the Steel Phantom. He was unparalleled at infiltration, theft and sabotage. No one on earth could match him. He fought spies from the west and agents of the Eastern Bloc's implacable Maoist enemy, China. He even took down the occasional supervillain. But of all the foes he faced, none were as terrible or determined as the Chinese super-agent they called the Iron Ghost, the fiercest member of China's legendary "Phantom Cadre."

The two men clashed half a dozen times over the course of ten years and a certain bond of respect grew up between them. The Iron Ghost was physically tougher and a more gifted combatant, but the Steel Phantom was far stealthier and more tactically adept. They both suspected that they were going to kill each other someday. But instead, something worse happened.

Economic reform and rampant capitalism transformed China beyond all recognition, while East Germany ceased to exist altogether, along with the rest of the

Warsaw Pact. This left both men in an awkward position. The Iron Ghost's masters in the Chinese intelligence services were willing to keep sending him on operations overseas, but they trusted him less and less. It looked to the Iron Ghost as though it was only a matter of time before they sent him on a suicide mission.

The Steel Phantom had to go into hiding in his old network of safe-houses, staying one jump ahead of the new German authorities. It took him quite a while to find a way to contact his old nemesis, but he finally managed it, and suggested that the two of them fight to the death, for old time's sake and to spare themselves the ignominy of being executed by their own people. The Iron Ghost agreed, but instead of fighting they stayed up all night talking in a hotel bar in Berlin.

Marx's dream had failed, they decided. The bad guys had won. From an army of hundreds of millions, the forces of Marxism had dwindled down to the two of them. They talked about going to Cuba or North Korea, but they had terrible enemies in both of those places, and anyway that would feel like conceding defeat. Much better to go out in a blaze of glory fighting World Capitalism. They've been looking for the right blaze of glory ever since.

Threat Level: The Ghost and the Phantom spend a lot of their time and resources just staying alive and out of jail. An adventure which involves them is as likely to revolve around catching them before they get away as it is around foiling some nefarious plot of theirs.

Despite the fact that they've now been working together for some time, they haven't yet been able to come up with a really big scheme that would do enough damage to World Capitalism to justify laying down their lives. They have agreed that it wouldn't make much sense to just assassinate a bunch of Wall Street tycoons and Fortune 500 CEOs—others would simply fill their shoes. Whatever big gesture they wind up making will have to be something that strikes at the underpinnings of western society.

They both agree that the really

insidious thing about modern capitalism is how attractive its consumer culture looks. The war was won by Mickey Mouse, McDonalds and supermodels in skimpy bathing suits, not by guns and bombs. How to strike at something as numinous and intangible as pop culture still eludes them. In the meantime, the Steel Phantom has become obsessed with wiping out decadent western art and has been breaking into museums to destroy famous paintings and sculptures. This, and the constant struggle to stay one step ahead of the authorities, now consumes most of their time. They're much too busy to bother hunting a hero or team, unless they somehow become convinced that the team symbolizes everything they hate about the West.

In combat they are efficient and cunning, ready to retreat whenever it's most expedient, but prepared to stand and fight if they think they have a chance of winning. They are both surprisingly reluctant to use lethal force—each of them has killed more times than they care to recall and they both find it distasteful. Yet they're too willing to put an opponent in the ground if it seems like the only way to stop them.

Base of Operations: Neither one has any fixed abode. The Steel Phantom still has some tiny little one-man safehouses and equipment dumps scattered around the world, but they're too small for more than one person, so the Iron Ghost has to find his own accommodations wherever he can (mostly he stays with old Chinese sleeper agents, but they are harder and harder to find these days). Now that they have decided to bring their quixotic crusade into America itself, the very heart of the beast, it will get tougher for them to find shelter.

Organization: An equal partnership, the Ghost and the Phantom get along surprisingly well for mortal enemies. They have both learned the hard way that the Iron Ghost is tougher in combat and the Steel Phantom is a better strategist, so there is an easy, intuitive division of labor between them. Neither one of them is exactly the leader. The Iron Ghost feels impatient with the Steel Phantom's current

fixation on destroying decadent Western art wherever he can find it, but he's willing to play along.

Tactics: The Ghost and the Phantom will give themselves every advantage in a fight. They hit from ambush if possible, they strike from behind if they can. If it's possible for them to achieve a mission objective without engaging in any combat at all, so much the better. They will set diversions, if possible, to draw heroes away from them or to make them split their forces.

While both of them are stealthy, the Steel Phantom is a lot more so. This means that the Iron Ghost is usually the one who creates diversions. If the Iron Ghost suddenly appears in front of you, guns blazing, you can bet that the Steel Phantom is sneaking up on you from behind.

Using the Ghost and the Phantom in Your Campaign: Relics of the Cold War, these two strange, pathetic men are an object lesson in what fanaticism can do to you. Make sure the PCs get to hear at least a little of their back-story so that the point doesn't get lost.

The Steel Phantom and the Iron Ghost can be encountered together or on some private business of their own (see the adventures listed under each of them for a glimpse of their private agendas) but if one of them gets in serious trouble, the other one will always come to their aid.

Let the PCs hear rumors about one or both of these high-legendary super-spies before they have a chance to encounter them. Let them chase them around, perhaps foil the Steel Phantom's efforts to mutilate great works of art, and then, once the PCs understand who they are and what they want, let them come up with some big, crazy, audacious scheme to crash the world's diamond markets or cause a panic on Wall Street or unleash some other kind of economic chaos.

Neither the Steel Phantom nor the Iron Ghost has any idea where to find an orbital death ray or a killer virus, and if they did they wouldn't use them. They want to liberate the people of the world, not kill them.

Adventures With the Ghost and the Phantom: 1) The Witchfinder General

A nervous, well-dressed little man named Aston Winterleigh contacts the Player Characters. He lives in a small but amazingly expensive townhouse in a good part of the city, surrounded by tasteful furnishings and relics of his career in the Intelligence Services.

Mr. Winterleigh was forced into retirement some years ago, during a scandal that he does not care to recall. He oversaw a branch so secret that it didn't have a name, which rooted out potential traitors and security risks in the nation's parahuman community. They called him the "Witchfinder General" he says with some pride. Alas, it made him a convenient target for the reformers. He still keeps in touch with his old comrades and looks in on the game from time to time, but he's a spectator now. Which brings him to the matter at hand.

Two weeks ago, the East German secret police's greatest spy, the one they called the Steel Phantom, was spotted in this very city. Clearly he has come for Mr. Winterleigh, to exact some awful vengeance on him. But there are other, even more troubling signs. The Chinese super-agent called the Iron Ghost has been sighted in town as well—the first time anyone has ever seen him on US soil. The Ghost and the Phantom are absolute, mortal enemies, Mr. Winterleigh happens to know. What can this mean? Come to think of it, how can the Steel Phantom even still be active, all these years after East Germany's fall?

Winterleigh can't go to any of his old contacts—that would just get them in trouble with their superiors. So he found the PCs. Will they help him track down these two notorious enemies of America? For their country, if not for him? He'll put his own formidable skills as a detective and an intelligence analyst at their disposal, and he'll give them access to any of the information in his secret files on their fellow parahumans. There's plenty of good stuff in there, he assures them. Things no one is supposed to know about anyone. Some of it may be out of date, he grants, but there's still a lot to interest them.

If the PCs want to take a look at Winterleigh's files, the GM should go ahead and let them. He keeps them in cardboard boxes stacked carelessly in his back room (the only untidy part of the house). Use the contents of the files to generate whatever plot hooks or revelations about other parahumans you like. Perhaps a PC even learns something unexpected about themselves! Don't let them linger over the files too long or read too much. We don't want you to have to give away all your campaign's secrets! And if there's a secret you *really* don't want them to come across, it's not in the files.

After a little hunting and some help from Mr. Winterleigh, the PCs discover a recently vacated lair that the Iron Ghost has been using in Chinatown (it's a hidden back room in an importer's shop; the present owners know nothing about it). The Ghost has left one of his notebooks behind. The notes are in a colloquial northern dialect of Chinese, and will take a little while to translate in full, but they seem to show that he knows Mr. Winterleigh's address.

Back at the townhouse, the PCs are comparing notes when the Iron Ghost bursts in and attacks them. This is a diversion. The Steel Phantom is burglarizing a room upstairs and making off with some even more secret files while the PCs battle his partner.

After a few rounds the Ghost suddenly backs off. Mr. Winterleigh, who has behaved with appalling cowardice throughout the battle, emerges from his hiding place behind a sofa and shrieks *"it was a diversion! The files! My god, the files!"*

If the PCs run off in the direction of his back room, he screams with exasperation *"Not those files, the other ones! Upstairs! The secret room behind the bookcase!"*

It should be hard but not impossible to foil the Ghost and the Phantom's scheme. Characters with the right kinds of powers (teleportation, super-speed, precognition) may actually be able to catch or at least interrupt the Steel Phantom before he gets away. If they do not, then the Ghost and the Phantom now have access to records on

the super-secret group which the Witchfinder General used to run. They have a long list of safehouses, secret bank accounts, weapons caches and the passwords used to activate them. For while the network may have been mothballed, it was never shut down entirely. There is still money in a lot of the accounts, many of the safehouses are still awaiting guests, the weapons caches are by-and-large untouched. The Ghost and the Phantom now have the tools they need for their crusade to begin in earnest.

Once the Iron Ghost's notes get translated, they reveal the truth—that the two old enemies are working together, that they want to make some big final gesture and go out in a blaze of glory, and that they haven't yet been able to think one up.

If either the Ghost or the Phantom gets captured, the other one will break them out of custody. If they were both driven off empty handed, they give up on Mr. Winterleigh and try another approach.

Whatever happens, the Witchfinder General no longer wants to speak with the Player Characters. Not long thereafter he dies of a heart attack in his sleep. Because he has no relatives, his things are sold at auction by the state. No trace of any files are ever found.

2) Gertrund Harder and the Idiot Bomb



The Ghost and the Phantom finally

have a plan. They have broken into some super-secret archives long-forgotten by the US military, and found something they can use to bring World Capitalism to its knees. The files call it the Idiot Bomb. Much too dreadful ever to be used, it was locked away at the end of the Cold War under a secret treaty with the Russians. Its creator was locked away, too, as were who-knows how many of her other creations.

Gertrund Harder was one of the Nazis' least ethical scientists. A clinical psychiatrist by training, she was in fact the infamous Doctor Zed's therapist (see Page 219 for a more detailed account of this infamous old arch-fiend) and spent many hours talking to him alone in his fortified cell at the Bogenhaven Lunatic Asylum. Not long thereafter she rose to prominence performing all sorts of radical new brain surgeries on prisoners and "genetic undesirables" (children, for the most part). Then she put what she had learned to work as a weapons designer, building numerous devices that relied on disrupting the human psyche. By 1944, the Nazi elite grew desperate enough to let her try using them, but Germany collapsed before she could move any of them beyond the prototype phase. Most of her best work she did for the Americans after the war. The Idiot Bomb is only one example.

The Ghost and the Phantom plan to assemble a working prototype and detonate it on Wall Street, just before trading starts at the beginning of the day. Everyone within a few blocks of the New York Stock Exchange will have their wits slowly scrambled over the course of the next few hours. This is a truly fiendish plan. The bomb produces no visible light and only a little noise. Traders on the floor and the business moguls in the nearby office buildings will have been making stupid, irrational decisions for hours before anyone notices that something weird is happening. By the time anyone starts drooling or talking gibberish, the damage will already have been done and the market will be on its way to a collapse. The rest of the world's markets should follow shortly—nothing could survive the economic shockwaves caused by the death of the New York Stock

Exchange.

In order to pull off the scheme, the Steel Phantom and the Iron Ghost have to hit two secret government warehouses and steal the components for the Idiot Bomb. One storage facility is located in the Nevada desert and one is in a Delaware industrial park. Both sites are extremely secure, but that poses little obstacle to the Ghost and the Phantom.

The PCs could get wind of this scheme either during the raid on the archives or when the warehouses get hit. It should be before the Ghost and the Phantom try to enact the third and most difficult part of the plan. Once they have the components, they need to know how to put them together, and only Gertrund Harder knew that.

The PCs should initially think that the Ghost and the Phantom are trying to track down her notes, but in fact they're after Doctor Harder herself. She's still alive, amazingly enough, watched over by US Marshals as a guest of the Witness Protection Program. She lives in a townhouse outside of Topeka, Kansas, surrounded by cuckoo clocks, ornamental beer steins and all kinds of other faux Bavarian folderol. Rosy-cheeked, hale and hearty at the age of ninety-six, Doctor Harder uses the alias "Joy Lavish" and still takes an active interest in life. A pediatrician, she divides her time between her private practice and ruling her local Garden Club with an iron hand. Despite her age, Doctor Lavish still sees patients every day, though she seldom gets the chance to hurt any of the little darlings very much. She looks sweet and grandmotherly and always calls everyone "Dear." Her eyes twinkle and her thick German accent only adds to her charm. Yet beneath her merry smile and cheerful demeanor she is as devoid of mercy as a cat, and just as unable to tolerate boredom. She's desperate to escape her bodyguards, her knick-knack cluttered townhouse and Topeka, and she'll cheerfully help anyone who comes to her with an evil scheme. And the Ghost and the Phantom have a really good one.

It may be confusing for your players to have to treat a sweet little old German

lady like a supervillain. To emphasize the kind of person Gertrund Harder really is, the GM might want to let the PCs' overhear the following reminiscence: *"Little Ari was such a clown, such a sweet little scamp of a Jew-child. He made all of us at the clinic laugh with his jokes and his winning ways. Until it was his turn, you know, to be dissected."* Or something of the sort—she has a lot of happy memories like that from her days in the service of the Reich.

If the GM would like to give the PCs an extra chance to foil this sinister plot, then the Ghost, the Phantom and their new partner test a smaller version of the bomb on a major sporting event. You can have a lot of fun describing the players, coaches and fans acting increasingly witless as the device takes effect and the PCs frantically search the stadium.

If the PCs fail to prevent them from setting off the device on Wall Street, a really cynical GM could pull their bacon out of the fire by saying that a day of moronic, irrational decisions on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange isn't that unusual, and barely affects the market at all.

THE STEEL PHANTOM



***"The Western world's soul is art.
Plunge your dagger there and the
brute will die."***

Real Name: Heinz Starkmann (but he has used so many aliases that he hasn't spoken his real name aloud in almost a decade)

PL: 9

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 24 (+7) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 20 (+5) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 11 **Attack Bonus:** 9
Defense: 12 (7 if unable to dodge)
Toughness Save: 9 (6 if unable to dodge, 3 if he isn't wearing his armor, either)
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 12
Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Acrobatics 12 (+19), Bluff 5 (+5), Climb 14 (+16), Computers 5 (+8), Concentration 9 (+14), Craft (Electronics) 9 (+12), Craft (Mechanical) 9 (+12), Disable Device 14 (+19), Disguise 14 (+14), Escape Artist 14 (+21), Gather Information 10 (+10), Knowledge (Art) 5 (+10), Knowledge (Current Events) 2 (+7), Knowledge

(Technology) 8 (+13), Languages (Czech, English, French, German, Russian), Notice 14 (+19), Profession (Spy) 10 (+15), Search 14 (+19), Sense Motive 10 (+15), Sleight of Hand 14 (+21), Stealth 14 (+21)

Feats: Assessment, Acrobatic Bluff, Defensive Roll 6, Distract, Dodge Focus 5, Evasion 2, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Block, Improved Defense 2, Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Improved Trip, Improved Throw, Improvised Tools, Instant Up, Interpose, Master Plan, Prone Fighting, Redirect, Second Chance 2 (Disable Device, Escape Artist), Set-Up, Skill Mastery (Craft [Electronics], Craft [Mechanical], Disable Device, Escape Artist), Sneak Attack 4 (+5 Damage bonus), Uncanny Dodge (Visual, Auditory)

Powers: Device (Stealth-Suit, Hard to lose; Powers: Concealment [from Hearing, Infravision, Motion-Detectors, Radar, Tremorsense, Ultra-Hearing, Ultravision] Immunity 2 [to Gas Attacks, Suffocation], Protection 3, Sensory Shield 9 [All Senses], Super-Senses 5 [Acute Hearing, Direction Sense, Time Sense, Tremorsense, Ultra-Hearing,]), Device: Billy Club (Easy to Lose, Melee Weapon, 2 Damage; Extra: Mighty)

Equipment: Comlink, Cutting Torch (Blast 1, Drain Toughness 2, No Range), Darkvision/Infravision Goggles, Disguise Kit, Lockpicks and burglary tools, Flash-Bang Pellets (3 Dazzle, Visual and Auditory in a 15 foot burst), Handcuffs, Grapple-Gun (Super-Movement [Swinging] 1, Palmtop Computer (With 9 PL Datalink), Stun-Gas Canister (PL 9 Stun, no range, requires a Melee Attack to squirt it under the target's nose)

Complications: Fanatical zealot, cannot stop himself from continuing his mad crusade against "decadent" western art, incapable of ever surrendering.

Background: Former secret agent for the East German Secret Police (the dreaded "Stasi"), a devotee of Stalin and Marx, he did many terrible things in the name of Socialism, and its collapse has rendered them all meaningless. He cannot cope with this. The horrendous things he had to do to protect the Deutschland Demokratik Republic from its enemies were all for naught. He sold his soul for nothing. Faced with this

intolerable reality, his personality has imploded into megalomania and he now wages an insane one-man war against the forces that he feels betrayed his country.

He is an amazing thief and has incredible tools designed for infiltration, theft and sabotage built into his costume. In the old days, only a few men scattered around the globe at the highest levels of the intelligence community knew the name "the Steel Phantom". Now the whole world will come to know that name, and tremble! The Steel Phantom has a long list of former East German political leaders and intelligence personnel to visit, one of these days. In the meantime, he carries on a bizarre crusade against decadent Western art, breaking into museums and defacing or destroying great paintings and sculpture.

This is probably how the PCs will encounter him, mutilating famous works of art in a gallery long after midnight. More equipped for stealth than for knock-down, drag-out fights, he will try to use the ground against his foes, relying on their desire not to see any of the paintings or sculptures damaged, and pick them off one by one in the dark. The Steel Phantom is as surprised as anyone to have found an ally in his old enemy, the Iron Ghost.

Adventures With the Steel Phantom:

1) The Long Arm of Weatherwax, Stover and Slemmons

The Steel Phantom gets captured while trying to deface a Chagall in the New York Museum of Modern Art (or whatever artwork and museum you think would work best in your campaign). Perhaps the Player Characters capture him, perhaps it's just a museum security guard who gets lucky. In either case, the fun really begins once he's in custody.

The local cops want to transport him to federal custody, but the Phantom claims that he will never live that long. He knows far too much about the secret, dirty things that happened during the Cold War, and there are elements of the American intelligence community who could be gravely embarrassed by his testimony if he ever came to trial. They'll probably have him killed in transit.

The cops don't know whether to believe him or not, but they're alarmed, and they call in the PCs to help them get the Steel Phantom safely into the custody of the Federal Marshals. They will take him in the back of an SUV, shackled to the door by one hand, with one police guard in back, one in front, a driver and as many of the PCs as they can fit (the vehicle has two bucket seats in front and two rows of seats in back, and can carry eight people at maximum capacity). If there are extra PCs, they can arrange for them to ride with a single police driver in a squad car in front of or behind the SUV.

Things are tense in the SUV. Buddy Storch, the driver, dislikes superheroes and doesn't mind saying this out loud. His partner, Curtis Spivey, rides shotgun in the front. Unfortunately, he has recently had an argument with Buddy (about whether or not all parahumans ought to be killed) and the two of them snipe and carp at each other throughout the drive. They don't know the backseat guard, Leonard Ong, very well, but he's a quiet guy who keeps to himself in any case. The Steel Phantom makes ominous remarks from time to time, and the enemy could be out there anywhere. Or it could all be a hoax, intended to jerk their chain, as Buddy Storch keeps pointing out.

Unfortunately, it isn't. A hit squad is already waiting to ambush them, just as the car goes up an overpass, with a sheer concrete wall on one side. It's a big team of seasoned pros, equipped with sniper rifles, rocket launchers and a lot of body armor. Use enough mercenaries to give the PCs a moderate challenge. The tricky part is going to be keeping the cops alive and the prisoner from escaping.

Just when they think things couldn't get any worse, the Iron Ghost shows up to rescue his partner. And Leonard Ong has been bribed to kill the Steel Phantom if it looks like the hit squad is going to fail.

If you need a back-story to this adventure, an explanation of exactly who is trying to kill the Phantom and why, then try this one. Twenty years ago, as the Cold War ground toward its weary close, agents Weatherwax, Stover, and Slemmons arranged to steal a huge stash of old Nazi gold out

from under the noses of the East German authorities. In order to do this, they had to betray a number of American agents, murder their supervisor and connive with one of your campaign's Big Evil Organizations (if there aren't any hordes of fanatical costumed agents with blaster rifles in your campaign, then use either the Mafia or a major supervillain instead). The Steel Phantom was their chief opposition on the East German side, he knows every ugly little detail of what happened, and so he must be killed.

Stansfield Weatherwax has since died and Herman Stover has retired to a comfortable life in Connecticut, but Noel Slemons is still in government service, at a very high level of an agency so secret that it doesn't even have a name. The mercs he sent out to kill the Steel Phantom are just muscle and don't know the story, but the unit's field commander was scheduled to meet Mr. Slemons' personal assistant tonight and pick up the last installment of the team's pay. If the PCs show up instead, they may be well on their way to uncovering the whole sordid mess. Of course, it's all going to be a lot easier if they can somehow get the Steel Phantom's cooperation.

Generic Cop (Use for all three)

PL: 3

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 3 (2 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Climb 2 (+4), Drive 4 (+5), Intimidate 5 (+6), Investigate 4 (+5), Knowledge (Civics) 3 (+4), Medicine 2 (+3), Notice 5 (+6), Profession (Police Officer) 4 (+5), Search 5 (+6), Sense Motive 3 (+4), Stealth 2 (+3)

Feats: Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Quick-Draw

Equipment: Body Armor (3 Protection), Nightstick (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

Generic Hit Squad Member

PL: 6

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 7 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 6 (+1 Flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Bluff 5 (+5), Climb 10 (+11), Intimidate 7 (+7), Knowledge (Tactics) 6 (+7), Notice 8 (+11), Stealth 7 (+10)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Defensive Roll 5, Elusive Target, Improved Aim, Improved Critical (With Sniper Rifle), Improved Initiative, Precise Shot, Sneak Attack 2

Equipment: Sniper Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage)

2) The Enemy of My Enemy is Still My Enemy

The Steel Phantom gets news of an illegal secret auction of stolen art. An ancient and unbelievably wealthy ex-Nazi named Larsen Wurmer has died (or make it some infamous Nazi supervillain who no one has heard from in years, if there is such a person in your campaign) and his vast art collection, looted from the finest houses in Europe, is coming up for sale. Wurmer lived in Barcelona, on an estate that is so secure and so heavily guarded that even the Steel Phantom doubts he could get in and out cleanly.

The Phantom hires Helmuth Frang, one of the world's premier investigators of stolen art, in hopes that he can tip off the authorities, have the collection confiscated and put in some less secure place, where the Steel Phantom would have an easier time getting at it. Frang is suspicious of his employer's motives, but he's fanatically dedicated to rescuing lost art and this is too good an opportunity to miss. The Spanish authorities are so uncooperative that he knows someone over there must have been bribed, so he considers other options.

Suddenly an interesting piece of news reaches Frang. The Wurmer family has heard that he's been asking around, stirring up the Spanish authorities, and they're on the point of panic. They have much worse things to hide than some stolen art and can't have the police nosing through

their affairs. They change the auction's location at the last second, to somewhere no one would ever suspect. It's going to be held in the PCs' home city.

At this point, Frang gets in touch with the PCs. He's a quiet middle-aged German who smokes pipes, wears sweaters and cultivates a neatly trimmed beard. He works out of his home—a surprisingly modest brick bungalow in a fading working class neighborhood and he'll prefer to talk to the PCs there. The house is cluttered with boxes and files full of information relating to one case or another. He also has rather too many cats.

Frang is good company, sympathetic, insightful and funny (in a dry, deadpan, German sort of way). He's completely open and tells the PCs the whole story, including his doubts about his current employer. Here are some stats for him, if you need them.

Helmuth Frang

PL: 7

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus** 4
Defense: 4 **Toughness Save:** 3
Fortitude Save: 3 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 8

Skills: Concentrate 8 (+12), Diplomacy 8 (+10), Gather Information 11 (+13), Investigate 9 (+13), Knowledge (Art) 12 (+16), Knowledge (History) 12 (+16), Knowledge (Streetwise) 10 (+14), Languages (Dutch, English, French, German, Spanish), Notice 12 (+16), Search 12 (+16), Sense Motive 12 (+16)

Feats: Assessment, Connected, Contacts, Second Chance 4 (Knowledge [Art], Notice, Search, Sense Motive), Skill Mastery (Knowledge [Art], Notice, Search, Sense Motive)

The auction will be held in a brand-new office building downtown, which doesn't yet have any tenants. They'll take bids in the huge conference room of one of the unused suites. Decadent rich people will attend either in person or by teleconference, and there may be a chance to make some juicy arrests. The Wurmers have hired

about ten goons for security—mostly former members of elite European military units who have served the family for years. They've also brought a moderately powerful supervillain for added protection.

If the GM wants to spice things up further, there may also be one or two supervillains in attendance to bid on the art (that's strictly optional, and will tend to take the focus away from the Steel Phantom). If the PCs crash the party, the Steel Phantom will too. He'll wait until the PCs have taken most of the opposition, and then try to destroy as many of the paintings and sculptures as he can before he has to run for it.

The Wurmer Family's Loyal Goons

PL: 5

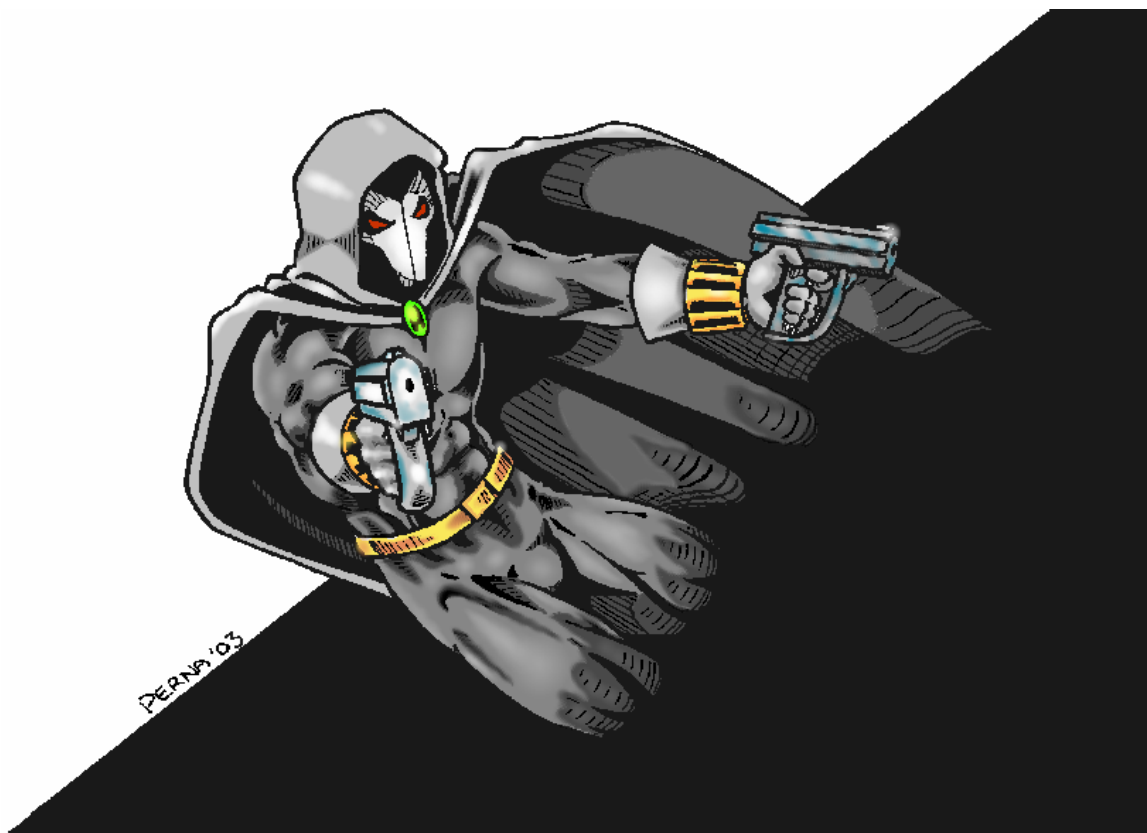
Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 3
Attack Bonus: 5 **Defense:** 5
Toughness Save: 4 (3 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 4 **Willpower Save:** 4

Skills: Disable Device 3 (+5), Intimidate 5 (+5), Notice 5 (+8), Search 2 (+5), Sense Motive 5 (+8)

Feats: Assessment, Chokehold, Precise Shot, Quick Draw

Equipment: Body Armor (+4 Toughness), Pistolgrip Shotgun (5 Damage) or Pistol (3 Damage)

THE IRON GHOST



"Traitors to the state are a cowardly, superstitious lot. To strike fear in their hearts I shall become—an Iron Ghost!"

PL: 11

Real Name: Wan-Chou Hark

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 22 (+6) **Con:** 16 (+3)

Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 14 **Attack Bonus:** 17

Defense: 14

Toughness Save: 8 (3 if unable to Dodge)

Fortitude Save: 8 **Reflexes Save:** 14

Willpower Save: 15

Skills: Acrobatics 10 (+16), Bluff 5 (+7), Climb 10 (+13), Craft (Mechanical) 6 (+8), Disable Device 8 (+10), Drive 2 (+8), Escape Artist 9 (+15), Gather Information 16 (+18), Intimidate 10 (+12), Knowledge

(Current Events) 4 (+6), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+7), Languages (Bulgarian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Fujian, Polish, Russian), Notice 14 (+18), Search 6 (+10), Sense Motive 4 (+8), Stealth 13 (+19)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Ambidexterity, Assessment, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 5, Elusive Target, Evasion 2, Grappling Finesse, Improved Aim, Improved Critical (With Pistols), Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative 2, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Interpose, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Precise Shot 2, Prone Fighting, Quick-Draw, Redirect, Startle, Takedown Attack, Uncanny Dodge (Auditory)

Equipment: Two massive 10mm Pistols

(Weapon 5 Damage), Mask with built-in Nightvision, Flash Protection and a Gas Filter (Immunity: to Poison Gas Attacks, Super-Senses: Darkvision, 4pts of Dazzle Protection), Mini-Tracer, Concealable Microphone, Multitool

Complications: fanatic devotee of Maoism, does whatever his ideology demands of him, even if it is contrary to his own best interest or puts him at a disadvantage.

Background: Legendary Chinese superagent, former member of the infamous Phantom Cadre, which caused so much havoc during the Cultural Revolution. The Iron Ghost is an ideological purist and still believes in the Gang of Four and its ideals. As a young man he gladly joined the Red Guard and helped kindly Chairman Mao wage war against impurity and revisionism. He was one of the thousands of bright-eyed, innocent youths who beat, humiliated or killed countless renegade intellectuals, teachers and other persons corrupted by Western Influences. He did so well that the People's Ministry of Internal Security whisked him away to a secret training facility somewhere outside Tsing Tao and made a special agent of him. He was sent on many missions overseas and showed a startling aptitude for violence and improvisational thinking, as well as a devotion to the Maoist cause which was nothing short of fanatical. Yet Internal Security was always his first love and he privately regretted not spending more time sniffing out foreign influences at home.

He was shocked when he returned from a long mission to find the Cultural Revolution was at an end, and its leaders imprisoned. It seemed that the Gang of Four who led the movement had themselves been ideological criminals of the lowest stripe, all along. This news grieved him, but he was forced to accept it—had not the Inner Party determined it to be the case?

He lost himself in his work and for the next ten years he seldom saw his homeland. He slowly became a legend, known as the "Iron Ghost." He fought the forces of the Soviet Union's false Socialism more often than he tangled directly with Capitalist Imperialism itself, killing a number

of the Warsaw pact's super-agents over the years. The one he could never quite beat was the East German—the one they called the Steel Phantom.

Meanwhile, huge changes were happening in China. Western goods, advertising and signs of private enterprise were everywhere. Each time the Iron Ghost came home, he left more frightened and confused than before. This began to make him gravely unhappy. He was just on the point of killing himself, when he got a call from his old nemesis, the Steel Phantom.

The two of them stayed up all night drinking at a hotel bar in Berlin, and talked about old times. By the dawn, the Iron Ghost knew what had happened to his country. The Gang of Four had been right all along. Capitalism had rotted China out from within. He left the service of his country that night and now wages a war on the sinister forces of Western Imperialism with the Steel Phantom at his side. Strange times make for stranger allegiances.

Adventures With the Iron Ghost: 1) The *Really* Odd Couple

The Iron Ghost shows up in the PCs' home town, battered and weary from a recent fight, looking for a place to rest and relax while he plans his next move. He has a badly outdated list of four Chinese sleeper agents who he might seek refuge with. Two are dead and one has moved so far out in the suburbs that the Ghost can't find him.

In fact, to his dismay, the Ghost finds that Chinatown isn't nearly as good a place to hide out as it used to be. Now most people speak English, most of them aren't afraid to speak to the police and feel more loyalty to the local sports teams than they do to the local tong. In fact, only a few of them actually live in Chinatown itself any more. The people who work in those colorful shops and restaurants mostly reside in the outer suburbs, and commute. If this doesn't fit the way Chinatown works in your campaign city, then just ignore it. If the Chinese district is still a sprawling neon ghetto filled with secretive folk who don't trust outsiders, then he's having trouble hiding because he's a Communist in a largely Nationalist Chinese community.

In either case, the Iron Ghost seeks refuge with an elderly man named Danny Feng. He runs a tiny shop that doesn't make much money, so he hasn't been able to move out of the city yet. Half convenience store, half curiosity shop, his place of business is crammed awkwardly into a too-small space under a gaudy neon sign. He stocks anything he can get cheaply in a job-lot, as well as any interesting relics of the mother country that happen to catch his eye. All kinds of intriguing stuff shows up in his shop. Martial arts weapons and herbs that you can't normally find in this country. Brands of ramen noodles that no one has ever heard of. Grinning porcelain buddhas that look just a little too much like Hello Kitty. Mr. Feng also teaches traditional Chinese medicine and a very eclectic and ancient form of Wing Chun Kung Fu on the side.

At least one of the PCs knows kindly old Mr. Feng, either as a martial arts teacher, a supplier of mystic herbs who knows a lot about China's occult history, or just a friendly, colorful character. He's a nice guy with a sense of humor about himself, who wears thong sandals and a white ponytail with traditional Chinese clothes. Part ex-hippie and part mystic sage, he loves the Simpsons and spins wise parables around it.

Mr. Feng's pretty granddaughter Ashley Wong works in his shop part time and hates it. The PCs have probably seen her there, beautiful and sullen, muttering to herself under her breath. She's a lot more uptight than her grandfather and she disapproves of both him and his cluttered store. Ashley doesn't reject her grandfather for his old-country immigrant ways—instead she regards him as a hippie burnout failure who should have closed his pointless shop and moved to the suburbs with everyone else long ago.

Now Mr. Feng is in terrible trouble. He can't turn the Iron Ghost away from his door. Even if the man doesn't kill him in some awful way he'll reveal that Feng is an agent of the Chinese government. It won't matter that the State Security services forgot about him twenty years ago and haven't given him any new orders for more

than thirty. He's here illegally, he's nominally a spy and in the current security climate he'll surely get deported or worse.

Feng won't go to the authorities for help. But Ashley figures out what's going on and runs to the PCs. She isn't so much worried about her grandfather as she is mad at him. This could get her whole family in trouble!

The Player Characters now have a choice to make. They can try to chase off the old man's terrifying house guest, but if they succeed, how are they to find out what kind of sinister mischief he's planning? The right choice is of course to help poor Mr. Feng anyway. Reward them if they do.

The Iron Ghost feels no strong attachment to his current refuge. In fact he finds living with Feng a terrible strain. The guy is just too messy and disorganized for the fastidious Iron Ghost to bear. They don't make good roommates and he'll be glad of an excuse to flee. He'll cut and run rather than stay and fight and he won't even come back for revenge. He won't ever want to see that stinky little shop or that crummy apartment again. He'll also leave some kind of clue as to what his next move is. We'll leave his plans up to you. Use whatever works best for your campaign. He could be arranging to break the Steel Phantom out of jail, to rob a post office for some emergency funds, or (perhaps best of all) to embark on the next adventure, listed below.

In the meantime, Feng will be extremely grateful and may give the PCs some kind of artifact that he's had lurking at the back of his shop for years or some other such assistance (a year's worth of off-brand ramen noodles?) He offers Ashley anything she wants in exchange for her help and to his surprise she asks him to fire her, and not come to Thanksgiving dinner this year.

2) Flower of Desolation, Blossom of Regrets

The Iron Ghost learns that one of his teammates from the Phantom Cadre may still be alive, in hiding, somewhere in the US. If this adventure is a sequel to the one listed above then he found out about it purely by random chance while he was staying with Danny Feng. Otherwise it

doesn't matter. The PCs will be drawn into this adventure the moment people start shooting one another and they'll have a chance to learn what's going on as events unfold.

The papers the Iron Ghost left behind in Danny Feng's apartment show that he recently learned a woman from his past is living under an assumed name somewhere in the United States, and that he's desperate to contact her. His notes don't reveal what the nature of their relationship was. When the PCs finally learn the truth, they're going to be in for a surprise.

She was the one they called the Flower of Desolation. He never knew her real name (although he always secretly suspected from her accent that she was born in Fukien) and he never saw her face unmasked. Yet he knew her well. She was the most radical member of the Cadre and perhaps the most dangerous. They didn't get along on a personal level, she twice tried to have him punished for Ideological Impurity, but he respected her absolute, unwavering dedication to the cause. How could she be in the US? What is she doing here? Could he at last find a worthy ally in his lonely struggle?

The Iron Ghost will have to work his way through a whole string of unsavory Triad types in order to learn who sold the Flower of Desolation her new identity papers and then he will have to get that person to tell him where she is. He starts with Sunny Jim Chang, proprietor of Sunny Jim's Auto-Rama, a shabby little used car lot that has the same rusty vehicles parked out front year after year. Sunny Jim makes most of his money selling temporary tags and forged registration papers to car thieves and people with identity problems.

All six of Sunny Jim's mean bodybuilding cousins are hanging around when the Iron Ghost pays a visit. He beats the stuffing out of them, and they're still mad about it when the PCs show up an hour or so later. Alas, the Player Characters are probably going to beat them silly too.

For his part Sunny Jim wants no further trouble. He hastily tells the PCs that the Iron Ghost was trying to find the man

who sold false identity papers to a woman he's tracking down. When he finds the guy who sold her the papers, he'll force him to say what name she's living under and where she can be found. It seemed to Sunny Jim like this was a personal matter, not business, but that's just his impression. A used car salesman learns to read people, he says. Sunny Jim has no idea who sold this woman her new identity, so he passed the Iron Ghost on to an information broker he knows—a creepy little rat called Porno Yee. He'll jot down Yee's address for the PCs on a post-it note with the Sunny Jim Auto-Rama logo.

Porno Yee lives over his mom's garage. He would live in the garage or in his mom's house, but they're both overflowing with his collection of Adult Cinema. Yee does online identity theft, sells the personal information that he steals over the web and spends every cent on his hobby. There are people in organized crime who consider him a valuable man and they donate bodyguards to help protect him, knowing that he could never be trusted to hire them on his own (he'd just spend the money on enlarging his collection). Four of them will be hanging around his place when the Iron Ghost swoops down out of the night. The Ghost beats them silly and threatens Yee's collection with grievous harm unless he comes clean.

The PCs get there just as the bodyguards are picking themselves up off the pavement. Two of them say they've had enough and leave Yee to the Player Characters, but the other two stand and fight. They have shiny new Uzi submachine guns at the ready, but this didn't stop the Iron Ghost and it probably won't stop the Player Characters either.

Upstairs poor Yee is struggling to get out from under a toppled pile of magazines and videos. He'll try to get away from the PCs, but feebly. Like Sunny Jim, he'll gladly tell them what they want to know if they agree to stop hitting him.

The Iron Ghost was looking for a woman, an ex-teammate of his. Some kind of supervillain called the Flower of Desolation who he knew back in the days when he worked for the Chinese

government. He just found out that she's still alive and he needs to see her for some kind of personal reason.

Yee doesn't know who could have sold her the identity papers, but he knows someone who would know. Anyone in the Chinese underworld who deals in fake identity papers in this part of the country has to give a share of their take to this one particular outfit. They know everyone in that field and they keep track of every deal that goes down. They're called the Big Brothers.

Big Huge and his brother Big Lots own a crappy Chinese buffet in a strip mall out on the Interstate. Called the "Big Buffet" it caters more to bikers and guys who are interested in doing drug deals than to connoisseurs of fine Asian cuisine. The Big Brothers eat all the food themselves, for no one else can stomach it. Yee has neglected to mention that they're both lieutenants in the Storm Shadow Triad and can call on a small army of vicious thugs in loud silk shirts when they need to.

Just to keep things spicy hot, when the Iron Ghost arrives a biker chieftain named Harold Redfers (aka Hairy Red) is about to do a major crank deal in the parking lot. Hairy Red is the warlord of the Satan's Sewing Circle Motorcycle Club, and has brought more than two dozen of his nearest and dearest friends with him to the party. His buyer is Baldwin Grady, leader of a white supremacist militia group called the Brotherhood of the Bone. Grady's lads have also turned out in force. When the Iron Ghost shows up and storms the buffet, a truly spectacular orgy of violence ensues.

The PCs arrive shortly after everyone has already shot one another, but just in time for the reinforcements to arrive. Once they've subdued all the nazis, bikers and Triad goons, they find the Big Brothers lying face down on the floor of their buffet like beached whales. Neither one of these seven-hundred pound gentlemen can stand up by themselves, and they will both be willing to tell the PCs anything they want to know if they'll turn them over. The Big Brothers are in serious danger of drowning in all the spilled Dim Sum on the floor.

They tell the PCs the whole thing, as described at the beginning of the

scenario. They know about the Phantom Cadre, they know about the Flower of Desolation's sinister reputation and they know why the Iron Ghost was looking for her. They also know who sold her the false identity papers. They did it themselves. She's living under the name Aretha Washington in a suburb of the PCs' home city. Perhaps it wasn't the most Asian name on the birth certificate, but it was the best one they could find.

The Big Brothers have kept track of Aretha, like they do all the people they assist, in case they can blackmail them later. She's a vice president for one of the city's largest banks. She has a pretty little yuppie husband, ten years her junior, a really expensive Mercedes, a Rolex watch. She's a capitalist pig. The PCs are going to have to hurry if they want to catch up with her before the Iron Ghost does. He may have wanted her as an ally before they explained all this to him, but that's probably not why he wants to find her now. The Big Brothers giggle. They're cruel men and they relish having been able to hurt the Iron Ghost. But they're not quite right about his motives. He is more eager than ever to find the Flower of Desolation now that he knows she's a sell-out, but he doesn't want to kill her. He just wants to ask her why. He's more troubled and confused than ever and perhaps she can explain things to him.

If the PCs intervene, they may well catch the Iron Ghost and put him behind bars. If not, he finds Aretha Washington outside her townhouse, looking over the brochure for a Hummer.

The Flower of Desolation doesn't have any superhuman abilities anymore—her powers came from a combination of experimental drugs and the collective will of the people and she no longer has ready access to either one. While she still knows some of her unarmed combat skills, she hasn't used them in years. She's a PL 5 character now. Her stats are on the next page, if you need them.

Flower of Desolation

Real Name: Aretha Washington (formerly Ping-Ping Xu)

PL: 5

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 19 (+4) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 13 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 15 (+2)
Initiative: 8 **Attack Bonus:** 5 **Defense:** 5
Toughness Save: 5 (1 if caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 3 **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 5

Skills: Computers 3 (+4), Drive 3 (+7), Knowledge (Civics) 4 (+5), Notice 7 (+8), Profession (Bank Vice President) 10 (+11), Stealth 5 (+9)

Feats: Connected, Defensive Roll 4, Evasion, Improved Initiative, Improved Block, Instant Up, Power Attack, Stunning Attack

Complications: Still fears being discovered and deported after all these years.

If the PCs catch up with Aretha before the Iron Ghost does, she refuses to talk to them about the matter. If they persist, she threatens them with legal action and gets a restraining order out against them in a remarkably short amount of time (her bank has excellent connections at City Hall). Her papers, while fake, are ironclad and her lawyers are some of the best in the city. She will not get deported, even if reputable PCs attempt to have her kicked out of the country.

If the Iron Ghost reaches her before the PCs ambush him, she will be startled but quickly compose herself. If no Player Characters jump out of the bushes and wrestle the Iron Ghost to the ground she will explain herself to him. She was never a real devotee of the cause, she says. She was a silly kid they picked up out of nowhere, who didn't know anything about anything. She was constantly afraid of slipping up, of letting the others know she didn't care about or even understand the ideology, so she tried to fake being as much of a fanatic as possible. She saw the Red Guard do terrible things to her schoolteachers in Fukien. She didn't want to end up like that. After the Cultural Revolution ended she could see that the Phantom Cadre's days were numbered. Now they were the ideological criminals

themselves. When the Shanghai Triads offered her a chance to fake her own death she jumped at it. She knows the Iron Ghost must feel disappointed in her, she says, but the truth is that she never betrayed her own ideals—she was always mostly interested in taking care of herself, even back then. And it was all so long ago and they were all so young and foolish.

The Iron Ghost stands in silence for a long moment. Then he says *"Perhaps you were."* and vanishes into the night (unless the PCs choose this moment to pounce on him).

WARGTIMMEN

Membership: God's Lightning (a parahuman commando and vicious neo-Nazi thug—the team's leader and founder), Bitchley Bitch-Bastard (kill-crazy Irish cyborg assassin, now exiled from her native land because she was too brutal for the conflict in Northern Ireland), the Gudge Brothers (a pair of indestructible morons who stick with the team because it gives them somewhere to sleep) and The Hooded Skull (an aristocratic masked master villain from Britain, who is starting to seriously reconsider his decision to sign on board with this gang of maniacs and fools)

Background: A superhuman paramilitary unit that travels the world on strange and violent errands. Their name means *"The Hour of the Beast."*

Not a lot of people know about Wargtimmen outside of the shadowy world of covert operations and even there they are something of a mystery. No one seems to know who they work for or what their agenda is. They seem to have some kind of neo-fascist leaning and their leader, God's Lightning, has been known to voice racist, anti-Semitic views from time to time, but it's unclear who or what they are fighting for. Nor does anyone seem to understand where they get their amazing ultra-high-tech arsenal of weapons or how they are able to vanish so completely for long periods of time.

There are rumors that Wargtimmen may take its orders from a cabal of doddering old Nazis in South America, or even from some last surviving enclave of the Third Reich in the frigid depths of Antarctica. God's Lightning seems to encourage these rumors, since it makes Wargtimmen seem mysterious, powerful and threatening. The truth is a good deal shabbier.

Wargtimmen is actually the creation of a group of South American landowners and military officers, which calls itself "White Thunder." They are deeply entangled in the cocaine trade (on the supply side) and in neo-fascist politics. White Thunder is based

in a small country in the Andes (possibly Bolivia, but of course that's up to the GM). Part Masonic lodge, part Klu-Klux Klan, they have been using violence to oppress the local Indians and fight "socialists" (by which they mean anyone who tries to improve the lot of the local Indians) for nearly a hundred years. White Thunder is getting old and starting to lose its grip on the country, but it is still extremely dangerous on its home turf. Stats for a standard White Thunder death squad are included at the end of this section. They believe in all kinds of bizarre conspiracy theories about Zionism and Jewish bankers and have grown increasingly out of touch with reality since the fall of Communism. The way in which they founded Wargtimmen illustrates a lot about what is wrong with White Thunder.

Recently White Thunder has come into possession of a lot of weird, high-tech weaponry. They have made an arrangement with a famous supervillain (your choice as to which one) to field-test his experimental weapons for him, but a lot of his prototypes are really dangerous and in any case they don't care to draw attention to themselves from their supplier's many enemies, so they prefer not to have their own people do the testing. Instead, they found a mercenary bullyboy who had done some muscle-work for them in the past, named Jack Briggs (an Australian fascist who had fought as a mercenary to help prolong white rule in South Africa) and asked him if he could field-test new weapons for them in urban conditions around the globe. He enthusiastically agreed, and they code-named the project "God's Lightning." It goes without saying that no responsible organization would ever have authorized a program like this.

Jack Briggs himself believes in most of the same conspiracy theories and white supremacist rhetoric as his bosses and has no difficulty finding targets to attack. He also has a lot of old enemies in the mercenary underworld to settle scores with. However, he's now operating in a realm where he's sure to draw the attention of one parahuman group or another and even with all his wonderful new toys he's not strong enough to take on a whole team of

superhumans by himself. So without any kind of approval from his superiors, he has brought other parahumans together to help him in his work.

He hired Bitchley Bitch-Bastard as a contractor. The two of them discovered that the British Government had a secret prison for superhuman criminals in the Andaman Islands, so they raided it out of curiosity and released its only two prisoners, the Gudge Brothers, who tag along after Wargtimmen because they have nowhere else to go.

Now that he had almost by accident assembled a team, Jack decided they needed an idea-man and sought out the infamous criminal mastermind known as Hooded Skull.

The whole team hasn't been together very long yet, which is a large part of why so little is known about them. They also make a concerted effort to stay out of the news.

Jack sometimes takes on mercenary work for people other than his bosses. White Thunder does not like this at all. Nor will they like it when they discover that he's been recruiting other parahumans without their permission. They may decide to have him killed. In the meantime, he's in a position to do the world a lot of damage.

Threat Level: Relatively low-powered, but mean as hell, Wargtimmen is meant to provide an solid challenge for a group of PL10 superheroes. They aren't all at PL 10, but they compensate for their relative weakness with their ruthlessness, the way their powers compliment one another and with lots and lots of dirty fighting.

Base of Operations: Wargtimmen can show up almost anywhere on earth. Jack Brigg's diplomatic passport and White Thunder's huge budget make it easy for them to get almost anywhere by chartered jet. The team prefers not to fly by commercial airliner, because some of them look so odd.

When the team isn't on some nefarious secret errand, they live on a huge yacht that White Thunder leases for them from a Liberian firm. The yacht is

enormous—the size of a small cruise ship, and it's fully staffed with men loyal to White Thunder. The team spends most of its time in international waters between missions, never staying in one place long. This is the secret of their ability to hide.

If White Thunder were to have some kind of serious falling out with God's Lightning, they would try to take the yacht away from him and he would most likely try to steal it. He would probably have to kill all the boat's staff, but he's perfectly capable of doing that.

Organization: You might expect Wargtimmen to be run like a spit-and-polish military unit, but in fact it's loose and informal. God's Lightning doesn't have the energy or inclination to waste on enforcing military discipline, and anyway that would just cause problems with Bitchley Bitch-Bastard, who reacts badly to any kind of structure. They spend a lot of time lazing about the yacht or goofing off when they aren't planning and executing missions.

God's Lightning is the leader and their ranged combat expert. Bitchley Bitch-Bastard is the muscle, Ian and Neville Gudge run interference on the battlefield and block incoming fire, while the Hooded Skull is the team's ideas man and technical expert.

They actually pull together quite well, despite having been selected more or less at random. The Gudges are so glad to have a place to sleep and food to eat, and so subservient by nature that they do whatever God's Lightning tells them, while Bitchley Bitch-Bastard is independent enough that she doesn't need much supervision and despite the Hooded Skull's abrasive personality he's good at his job and even better at staying out of the boss' way when he's in a foul mood.

Yet there are tensions in the team that could easily destroy it. The Hooded Skull secretly fears and hates God's Lightning. Bitchley Bitch-Bastard might get bored and do something irresponsible (like setting fires or blowing stuff up on the yacht) that would turn the boss against her. God's Lightning is a bigot, but he hasn't yet realized that the Gudge Brothers are of

mixed ancestry. When he does he is going to think they tricked him, and he is going to be mad. Yet Wargtimmen hasn't actually been together long enough for any of these potential conflicts to come to a head.

Tactics: Surprisingly good team players, in the short time they have worked together they have fallen into an easy rhythm in combat, and always attack in concert.

They prefer to hit from ambush, they prefer to strike first, by surprise if possible, and they concentrate their fire on tough targets. They know how to how to hide and they know when to retreat. They strike to kill, unless they have a good reason not to, and while they might take hostages, they don't take prisoners.

Using Wargtimmen in Your Campaign:

Fighting Wargtimmen presents some interesting and unexpected challenges for Player Characters. Unlike most supervillain groups, Wargtimmen isn't currently being hunted by the authorities. Partly this is because they are relatively new, but it's also because they keep a low profile and operate primarily in the shadows. The Gudge Brothers are technically fugitives from British custody, but they are not actively being sought. The Hooded Skull's involvement is suspected in numerous big robberies across the Pacific Rim, but no one has any hard evidence against him. While God's Lightning is unwelcome in South Africa and Australia in his secret identity, neither he nor Bitchley Bitch-Bastard are presently wanted for any crimes.

As a further complication, God's Lightning travels under a diplomatic passport, which makes it difficult to hold him for trial if he does get captured. He will also try to wave his diplomatic credentials to get his teammates released from custody, and although that's not really how it works, not all local law-enforcement personnel know this, and may fall for his bluff.

Wargtimmen primarily fights other parahumans, takes on missions for White Thunder or attacks Jack Briggs' old enemies. But now that they have brought the Hooded Skull on board they may branch out into robbery. If they do, then they will attempt

the kinds of crimes the Hooded Skull usually favors—thefts of huge diamonds or priceless works of art or other small, portable goods with enormous cash value.

Unfortunately, the Hooded Skull's style of crime doesn't really mesh that well with the missions White Thunder wants to use Wargtimmen for. He's a thief, not a paramilitary fighter and his kind of high-profile, non-political crime is exactly the kind of thing that is likely to get God's Lightning into trouble with his backers.

White Thunder Murder-Squad

PL: 4

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 4 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 4 (1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 3 **Willpower Save:** 4

Skills: Intimidate 6 (+6), Notice 4 (+5), Ride or Drive 2 (+3), Search 3 (+4), Stealth 4 (+5), Survival 5 (+6)

Feats: Interpose, Startle, Tracking

Equipment: Body Armor (4 Toughness), Darkvision Goggles (Super-Senses 2: Darkvision), Gas Mask (Immunity to Suffocation), MPL Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage; Extra: Autofire), Radio (Radio Reception/Transmission, Range: 1 Mile)

Complications: Fanatically loyal to White Thunder, willing to die, kill, or commit any atrocity for the cause.

Background: Vicious thugs with a twist—most of these young men have been recruited from the richest families in South America. As the Hooded Skull will learn to his chagrin, they sometimes know a surprising amount about things like opera and fine wines. Of course most sons of the big landholding families in the Andes learn how to shoot and ride and hunt from early childhood. After a few years in the Army they're ideal recruits. They also have the right attitude toward Indians and leftists (murderous contempt). When presenting White Thunder assassins to the Players, the GM may slyly note that one or another of them is wearing four-hundred dollar hiking boots and even more expensive sunglasses.

They operate in teams of five. A

team is usually comprised of a medic, a team leader and three grunts with submachine guns. The Team Leader is equipped like the grunts. The medic has Medicine 5, a first aid kit and a pistol (4 damage) instead of a submachine gun.

If they're up against a particularly tough opponent, they may have a heavy weapon specialist or demolitions expert with them, in place of one of the grunts. A heavy weapons specialist will usually carry a rocket-grenade launcher (PL 8 Attack: Extra: Burst Radius; Flaw: Unreliable [Only five uses]) and a lightweight pistol (Damage 2) rather than a submachine gun.

A demolitions expert will have Disable Device 5 and a set of four explosive charges (Damage 9; Extra: Burst Radius; Unreliable [Only four uses]) instead of a gun. His Listen skill will only be a 1; the consequence of spending a lot of time around loud explosions.

If need be, the squad will probably be able to call on the services of a professional tracker. He'll have a hunting rifle (Damage 3) instead of a submachine gun, and his Spot and Search skills will both be 6. The tracker will be an addition to the team rather than replacing one of the grunts.

They don't have a lot of snipers, and will only assign one to a team if they really need to. Here are the stats for one.

White Thunder Sniper

PL: 6

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 7 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 5 (+1 without Body Armor) **Fortitude Save:** 6
Reflexes Save: 6 **Willpower Save:** 6

Skills: Climb 10 (+11), Intimidate 3 (+3), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+6), Notice 8 (+10), Ride or Drive 3 (+6), Stealth 7 (+10), Survival 7 (+10)

Feats: Elusive Target, Equipment 1 (5 pts. of equipment), Improved Aim, Improved Critical (With Sniper Rifle), Improved Initiative, Precise Shot, Sneak Attack, Track

Equipment: Body Armor (5 Toughness), Darkvision Goggles (Super-Senses 2: Darkvision), Gas Mask (Immunity to

Suffocation), Sniper Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage), Radio (Radio Reception/Transmission, Range: 1 Mile)

Complication: Fanatically loyal to White Thunder, willing to die, kill, or commit any atrocity for the cause.

White Thunder's Equipment: The submachine gun is their weapon of choice. They have a large stockpile of the Walther MPL and MPK models—the only large organization ever to buy these models in bulk (this could make it easy for a PC to identify White Thunder operatives if they're familiar with them).



THE WALTHER MPL

For close-in assassinations they prefer the Russian VP-70, an odd-looking, sleek little pistol engineered specifically for concealment under an operative's clothing.

There is a lot of variation in the weapons that individual agents carry, since they are allowed to buy their own gear and most of them can afford to.

There is no official uniform for White Thunder, but when they're on assignment most operatives wear camouflage under their dark grey body armor, with ski masks or balaclavas. They tend not to wear their night-vision goggles or gas masks unless they have to. As noted above, a lot of them like expensive, scary-looking sunglasses.

On undercover assignments or overseas they can dress like anything—although we should note that wealthy young men in their country like to wear camouflage and sunglasses anyway.

When they meet on ceremonial occasions, members of White Thunder wear colorful hooded robes that display their rank and degree of initiation—these look a lot like more brightly colored versions of the outfits

worn by the Klu-Klux Klan. They never wear this gear in public or on assignment. It's strictly ceremonial. This may create opportunities for brave PCs who want to infiltrate one of their meetings—just knock out an attendee or two and take their robes.

Adventures With Wargtimmen:

1) Day of Blood

The South American rain forest is suddenly in the news again. It seems that a logging company with an unsavory reputation has been using strong-arm tactics to throw a tribe of Indians off their land, deep in the cloud forest, where the jungle rises up into the mountains of the Andes.

Normally no one would hear anything about this kind of skullduggery, the region is so remote. But a famous actress (pick a real one or make one up) has been trying to draw attention to the plight of the Indians. With her help they have managed to get the local government to investigate the matter. A picture of the actress standing in the way of a giant bulldozer, blocking its path, has gone worldwide, and the whole matter is now getting serious international scrutiny. The loggers have been stopped in their tracks.

Put these developments in the background, make the PCs aware of them during the course of some other adventure, but don't make it look like a plot-hook. Then a fat, untidy man named LeRoy Gergen comes to the PCs with a horrifying discovery. Gergen works for a giant shipping firm in data management. He's so involved in LARPing that he rarely has time to follow the news, but he is aware of these recent events in the South American jungle.

A few days ago he processed an order for a very odd shipment. It's a set of barrels, filled with some kind of hazardous liquid (in fact, because of the dimensions of the barrels and the chemical factory that the order originates from, he's pretty sure they're filled with cyanide). The order calls for the barrels to be transported to the South American rain forest, to the town nearest where the altercation between the Indians and the loggers has been taking place. He's almost sure, because of the way the forms have been filled out, that the

names of the shipper and the recipient are both fake, and that steps are being taken to change the classification of the barrels to get them past customs without having to declare their precise content. So, why would someone need to send six barrels of cyanide to a remote part of the jungle, and conceal their identity? This all looks really ominous to him, so he had a friend who's a superhero fanatic get him the PCs' contact information. He knows exactly where the barrels are supposed to be unloaded from the truck, at a receiving station in a tiny jungle village.

Things get even more ominous after the PCs speak with Gergen. The actress who has been protecting the Indians suddenly has to return to the United States—her father has been attacked and beaten unconscious by unknown assailants, no one knows if he will live or die. Once she leaves, the press stops paying attention to the plight of the Indians and gets distracted by a minor celebrity scandal. Anything might be about to happen down there. And something is.

The logging company has hired Wargtimmen to solve the Indian problem. Jack Briggs and his merry crew are going to take delivery of the barrels and then head deep into the forest, where they plan to use the cyanide to poison the Indians' water supply. The team will hunt down and slaughter anyone who survives.

The Gudge Brothers are even more hopeless than usual in the jungle, a totally foreign environment to them. The Hooded Skull has some personal business to take care of in the Far East and hasn't come on the mission. His talents weren't really suited for a job like this in any case.

The region is wild and lawless and the PCs will be on their own. With no one else there to see how the battle goes, it will be very hard to make charges stick against any members of Wargtimmen who get captured. This is on the edge of White Thunder's turf, as well, and the GM can throw a hit squad or two at the PCs as they travel deeper into the wilderness. If the PCs wind up in a jungle game of cat-and-mouse with Wargtimmen, they will find the local Indians to be good allies. Of course their

opponents can find help and support from the loggers.

2) The Great Defenestration Contest

God's Lightning and Bitchley Bitch-Bastard get into a drunken argument over who could throw the most people out of the window in an hour. And so begins the Great Defenestration Contest. They stagger over to the nearby state college, walk down Greek Row, each select a fraternity or a sorority and throw everyone inside out the window. Once they finish, they rush next door and attack the next house.

Word reaches the PCs that someone is chucking kids out of windows. Presumably, they race down to the campus to stop them.

God's Lightning and Bitchley Bitch-Bastard are working opposite ends of Greek Row. This may lead to confusing reports about where the mayhem is taking place and may lead the PCs to divide their forces. Both villains are pretty drunk, but they're used to fighting while inebriated and so their combat statistics are still at their regular levels. No one has actually died yet, but there are a lot of injured people in the street, on the sidewalks and in some cases hanging from the trees, moaning and crying and begging for help. Many of their injuries are serious and require prompt medical attention. Caring for the injured may slow the PCs down, too. If they aren't stopped before the hour is up, Bitchley Bitch-Bastard and God's Lightning meet in the middle of Greek Row and realize that they've both lost count. Anyway it looks like it was probably a tie.

"Double or Nothing?" asks Bitchley Bitch-Bastard.

God's Lightning agrees, and the two of them set off for the tower dormitories visible in the distance—which are eight stories tall!

3) Hour of Reckoning

After they've had a couple of bruising fights with Wargtimmen, a mysterious patron (who may or may not be connected with the American intelligence services) gives the Player Characters a chance at revenge.

The patron requests a meeting with

the PCs at a rented office suite in a refurbished mansion downtown. The top floor of this grand old building used to be an architectural design firm, but now the whole suite is empty, save for a church table with a speakerphone on it and some metal folding chairs. A meeting planning firm has been hired to set up the details of the meeting itself and they've retained a pair of bright young paralegal temps named Brad and Marika who have no idea who has hired them or what the meeting is about. They greet the PCs cheerfully at the door of the suite, show them into the room with the table, indicate that they're supposed to sit in the chairs and then leave. They are available to bring the PCs bottled water or pads of paper to take notes on, and will stay to show the PCs out and clean things up after them. If a PC asks either of the paralegals what they know about this matter, they tell them that they signed a nondisclosure agreement when their temp agency assigned them to this job. It pays about twice the going rate, but they both assumed that this is because they're only being asked to work for four hours in total.

Once Brad and Marika leave the room, an electronically distorted voice starts talking over the intercom (if a PC has some means of tracing it while they're sitting there, it's coming directly from a relay satellite that has been designed to mask the origins of transmissions like this one. If they have some means of penetrating beyond that kind of security, the phone call originates by the side of the swimming pool at the Djakarta Hilton in Indonesia).

The voice greets the PCs and asks them how they would like to get a shot at Wargtimmen. If they express an interest, the voice tells them that Wargtimmen will be at their headquarters one week from today. At exactly 5:00 AM New Brunswick time their communications system will be disabled for three minutes. Wargtimmen's patrons will know nothing about what happens to them for those three minutes, they will be unable to summon any assistance from the authorities and they will be unable to detect anyone approaching their lair. Should the PCs want to be present for those three minutes, they should feel

free to wreak as much havoc on Wargtimmen as they possibly can.

If the PCs seem dubious or ask why the speaker would be interested in helping them, the voice asks Brad and Marika to come into the room and bring the yellow meeting packets. They do, smiling cheerfully and asking if anyone needs any bottled water as they pass out a set of large yellow envelopes. After the temps leave, the voice asks the PCs to open the packets. The envelopes contain photographs of civilians, women and children, mostly, who have died in Wargtimmen's raids. These people were bystanders who happened to get caught in the crossfire, the voice explains, or hostages that Wargtimmen executed or people who got mistaken for targets in the heat of combat. *"That is why,"* the voice says *"we are willing to help you."*

The voice's real identity and motivations we leave up to the GM. Whoever they are, the patrons are telling the truth about the mission. Whenever the PCs agree to help, the temps bring in the green meeting packets, which contain plane tickets to Portugal, fake identity papers for any PCs who might need them, and the business card of a Canadian pilot who flies out of Lisbon. The voice explains that the pilot has instructions to drop them over the target at the critical moment. There are parasails on board the aircraft for PCs who can't fly. PCs who can't fly or parasail have been enrolled in a three day parasailing course at the University of Lisbon.

When the PCs meet up with their pilot, Dougal MacInnis, they find him to be a friendly, talkative ex-hippie who takes nothing seriously and has an entirely too casual attitude toward air safety. He flies a huge old Russian seaplane which can easily hold fifteen people and which hasn't been maintained in a little too long. A former drug runner and long-time errand boy for one or another intelligence agency, he asks no awkward personal questions and deflects all inquiries about his own past with a joke. His fee was paid in advance by a tall, quiet, deeply tanned guy who always pays cash and who has sent him assignments like this before. Dougal never caught the man's name. He thinks he's probably dropping the

PCs as part of a training exercise and he's been instructed not to tell them the target's location.

Dougal has been led to believe that he's dropping them over a villa on the northwest coast of Spain, but at the last second his instructions get changed (while he's already in the air) and he flies his seaplane out over the open ocean instead. He drops the PCs when he spies the yacht on the horizon, just as dawn breaks. The yacht's communications systems go down just as the PCs come into the range of its radar. For the next three minutes, the world will never know about anything they do to Wargtimmen.

Scenarios with a time limit are always good for generating suspense. To help keep things properly tense, the GM should rigorously keep track of the amount of time the PCs spend doing everything and anything once they put down on the yacht. Mention the fact that they're breaking a lot of laws and the Maritime Code, that they have no warrants, that this is officially an act of piracy. Describe the sun rising bloody in the east, the black hulk of the gigantic yacht beneath them. Who knows what's waiting for them down there? Wargtimmen is caught completely by surprise. They're spread out all over the boat, each doing whatever you'd expect them to be doing at five in the morning (none of them are asleep). If the PCs handle this right, they could do Wargtimmen some serious damage and possibly find documents that will expose the cabal behind them.

After the raid, if the PCs drop a rubber raft overboard or just leave the ship under their own power, Dougal picks them up in his seaplane, putting down on the open water if he has to. If the PCs get in really bad trouble on the boat, he'll try to come to their rescue, strafing the deck with fire from an extremely illegal M-60 machine gun he has hidden on board. All the way back to Lisbon he cheerfully babbles about movies and the beauty of the North Atlantic at dawn. Not once does he ask them anything about the mission.

GOD'S LIGHTNING



"When I send you to Hell, be sure to look up your mum and tell her from me that she was lousy in bed"

Real Name: Jack Briggs

PL: 10

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 8 **Attack Bonus** 12
Defense: 10 (4 if caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 9 (6 if caught Flatfooted, 3 if caught Flatfooted without his body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 8
Reflexes Save: 11 **Willpower Save:** 8

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Climb 5 (+12), Disable Device 4 (+4), Drive 4 (+8), Gather Information 3 (+6), Intimidate 10 (+13), Notice 6 (+8), Search 3 (+5), Stealth 6 (+10), Survival 7 (+9)

Feats: Chokehold, Connected, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 6, Endurance, Evasion, Improved Aim, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Pin, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Takedown Attack, Taunt, Tracking

Powers: Device (Body Armor; 3 Protection)

Equipment: Comlink, Darkvision Goggles, Energy Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 8 Damage), Gas Filter mask (Immunity to Poison Gas Attacks), GPS positioning system (Super-

Senses: Direction Sense), Grenades (Weapon, 10 damage; Extra: Area [15 foot burst]; Flaw: Can only be used three times per adventure), Miniature Parabolic Microphone (Super-Senses: Acute Hearing)

Complications: Bigot (finds it impossible to work with members of other ethnic groups, even if it would be to his advantage, attacks members of these groups in preference to all other targets).

Background: An Australian neo-fascist who always yearned to become a mercenary, Jack Briggs is living his dream.

Back in the days when South Africa's all-white government was teetering on the brink, Jack was one of many Australian white supremacists who came over illegally to support them. For years he fought the African National Congress in the streets of Durban and Pretoria, killing civil rights activists and community leaders and their families. He was an amazingly gifted soldier for some one with no professional training.

By the time Nelson Mandela took power, Jack was no longer welcome back in Australia, so he kept hiring out as a mercenary to fight Socialism, Zionism, and so forth. He got most of his work in South America, where there were still commies to kill and rich landowners ready and willing to pay to have them killed.

He did a little muscle work between jobs for anyone who paid, tended bar or worked as a bouncer when nothing else was available. He even served briefly on two different supervillains' personal staff.

When White Thunder went looking for a vicious, expendable brute to bring on board for the "Lightning of God" program, he was the first one they thought of.

He has parleyed the money they've given him into some decent investments, used that to buy some muscle-graft, plastoflesh and cybernetic implants from various underground clinics, enhancing his athletic performance to just a little better than human.

You would think that Jack would be happy, living the life he's always dreamed of, but in fact happiness still eludes him. Jack is a worrier by nature, and a

complainer. Constantly bitter and annoyed, he never seems to smile and is always griping about some petty little thing. He seems to mutter everything he says between his teeth, if he isn't screaming at someone.

Like a lot of really bad people, he's so self-absorbed that he has nothing left over for anyone else. Sympathy, mercy, fair play, all are completely foreign to him. Yet he will brood and complain and lash out if he feels that he has been treated unfairly in even the slightest, most trivial way.

He's not as actively sadistic as Bitchley Bitch-Bastard and doesn't go out of his way to hurt innocent bystanders, but no one is safe from him. He's killed women, he's killed kids, he's taken hostages and killed them out of spite, he's tortured and brutalized for fun and business, both. No sickening, underhanded deed is beneath him. Yet it has never occurred to him to wonder if he's a bad human being. He's too busy fuming over whether the Hooded Skull got a bigger piece of toast at breakfast than he did.

The GM can actually play this for laughs, in a grim kind of way. God's Lightning may punch some poor hapless victim repeatedly in the stomach, complaining the whole time about how this makes him sweat inside his suit, which is really uncomfortable. He may shoot someone in the head and whine about how badly this gun kicks when it's fired at close range, and how it hurts his finger. I'm sure you can think up a whole bunch of ugly gags like this.

Jack sincerely believes all kinds of conspiracy-theory rubbish about the Queen of England and Jewish bankers running the world, and he'll carry on about this endlessly if you let him. A petulant, vengeful child of a man, he never forgets an insult and will spend years plotting revenge.

Brave in combat, in his off hours he is constantly beset by worries, which he lacks the emotional maturity to cope with. More than once this has led him to work himself into a paranoid lather about some teammate or comrade who genuinely doesn't mean him any harm. He has killed or betrayed friends for nothing when he

gets like this.

Good at thinking up clever threats and insults, he has surprisingly little sense of humor, especially about himself, and never laughs at a joke. And on top of his other charming features, he's an alcoholic.

He's not really suited to be a team leader. In fact, the only reason that he hasn't yet run Wargtimmen into the ground is that he happens by accident to have assembled exactly the right group of personalities. Bitchley Bitch-Bastard doesn't care about anything. The Gudge Brothers are desperate to please. The Hooded Skull is much too smart and much too afraid of Jack to say anything that might set him off.

Jack loves the Hooded Skull right now, loves his sense of style, the touch of class he brings to the outfit. This will no doubt turn to bitter contempt the first time the Hooded Skull disappoints him, and could turn lethal.

Adventures With God's Lightning:

1) Big Job

Controversial Major League pitcher Lawrence "Spanky" Trombino throws a huge party to celebrate the death of his stepmother and hires as elephant as part of the entertainment. Once the party is underway Spanky gets drunk and tries to torment the beast in front of his guests, pulling its ears, blowing cigar smoke up its trunk and so forth. The elephant becomes alarmed and voids her bowels in front of everybody.

In a rage, Spanky Trombino swears revenge against the elephant who showed him such disrespect. He doesn't want to poison or her kill her in her stall while she's asleep—he wants her death to be spectacular. He wants to hire a supervillain to do the deed. Spanky knows some people in organized crime—he's begun to invest in cocaine smuggling as a sideline to his income, and he has some South American contacts who know how to get in touch with Wargtimmen.

Jack Briggs thinks that killing an elephant would be a good way to field-test a new weapon he's been given, and an interesting challenge as well, so he offers his services for nothing. He plans to hit the

elephant while she's being transported to a charity appearance at an outdoor festival for underprivileged kids, in the PCs' home city. He will shoot the trailer off the road, send the elephant rampaging down the street in a panic and then shoot her dead. It's perfect, he even has an excuse to kill her in public. However, he doesn't count on getting too drunk to see straight before the hit. Unable to shoot out the trailer's tires, he staggers into the outdoor festival and tries to kill her there.

PCs can get involved in this ugly business in three ways. They can learn that Jack Briggs is in town and track him to see what he's up to (remember that until the moment he attacks the elephant he has done nothing illegal). They may also hear that someone in organized crime has ordered a hit on someone who will be at the festival. Give them a red herring here, some community leader who may be in trouble with the Mob. Then it turns out that the target is actually the elephant! As a third possibility, the PCs may attend the festival as invited guests, here to demonstrate their powers for the crowd and tell kids to stay off drugs, etc.

Jack is drunk enough that he'll blurt out the whole reason why he's here to the PCs while he's fighting them. Alas, his new energy weapon doesn't work properly and once she's wounded the elephant will defend herself vigorously. And let's not forget all the complications posed by the hundreds of horrified, screaming, fleeing kids.

As a surprise ending, if the PCs and seem to be on the verge of losing, a crowd of juvenile delinquents comes to their aid, overwhelming God's Lightning with sheer numbers and beating the living daylights out of him (they're annoyed at having their party disrupted).

Remember that if he's taken prisoner, Jack Briggs is almost sure to get bail and vanish. The city authorities will do their best to throw the book at him, even though Spanky hires him a well-connected lawyer. Yet killing an elephant is a misdemeanor, as are disorderly conduct and reckless endangerment. His lawyer will claim that he was valiantly trying to protect

the crowd against a rampaging elephant and the press will pick up on this story, questioning the PCs' behavior in apprehending him.

If on the other hand they go after Spanky Trombino, the "Bad Boy of Baseball" will attempt to kill them with some choice items from his illegal collection of automatic weapons and go to prison for a satisfyingly long time after they kick the stuffing out of him. They will also find plenty of leads on his cocaine connections in his house.

An Elephant

PL: 9

Str: 30 (+10) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** 20 (+5)

Int: 6 (-2) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 18 (+4)

Initiative: -1

Attack Bonus: 6 (Includes -2 due to size)

Defense: 0 (Includes -2 due to size)

Toughness Save: 7 **Fortitude Save:** 7

Reflexes Save: -1 **Willpower Save:** 1

Skills: Intimidate 7 (+9), Notice 10 (+11), Performance 5 (+9)

Feats: Distract (linked to Intimidate),

Improved Grapple, Scent, Startle, Tracking

Powers: Additional Limbs (Trunk), Growth 8 (Extra: Innate; Flaw: Permanent), Protection 4, Strike 1 (Extra: Mighty), Super-Senses 3 (Acute Hearing, Scent, Ultra-Hearing)

Spanky Trombino

PL: 9

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)

Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 16 (+3)

Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 9

Defense: 9 (3 if caught Flatfooted)

Toughness Save: 3 **Fortitude Save:** 9

Reflexes Save: 9 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Bluff 9 (+12), Intimidate 11 (+14), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 6 (+8), Notice 8 (+8), Profession (baseball player) 12 (+14), Ride 4 (+7), Search 4 (+4), Sense Motive 4 (+4), Stealth 3 (+6), Survival 8 (+8)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Assessment, Connected, Dodge Focus 6, Endurance, Improved Critical (with rifle), Improved Block, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Precise Shot 2, Redirect, Throwing Mastery

Equipment: Automatic Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage; Extra: Autofire; Cost:

2pts), Night-Binoculars (Super-Senses: Darkvision, Extended Vision)

Complications: Has to indulge every violent whim that pops into his head.

2)The *&@%! Bodyguard

Drug-crazed teen pop idol Ashleey Pinke has fallen violently in love with God's Lightning. He has joined her entourage as a sort of security consultant, in charge (it seems) of getting drunk, beating people up for no reason and acting badly in public. He misbehaves and attacks people at nearly every stop on her ongoing world tour.

This should be a tailor-made opportunity for the PCs to finally catch him doing something illegal in public, but in fact it's not that simple. God's Lightning now has the entire record division of a huge multi-national corporation ready to bail him out of trouble at every turn. Despite being crazy, irrational and heavily drug-dependant, Miss Pinke is an icon of All-American wholesomeness to millions of preteens worldwide and her parent company isn't about to let a misbehaving bodyguard ruin that. Every time he threatens some hapless service person with bodily harm, beats up a fan, injures a caterer or throws another hairstylist through a window for "*looking gay*" at him, teams of lawyers and publicists crack down on the situation, planting stories in the press and threatening witnesses with lawsuits and jail time. This could get pretty frustrating for PCs who are looking to put him behind bars. Unless of course the PCs can somehow provoke him into doing something so completely outrageous on camera that nothing could cover it up.

If this happens, he'll have more than jail time to worry about—the vengeful execs will hire a supervillain to put him in the ground. Unfortunately for them, they choose Bitchley Bitch-Bastard, not knowing that she's an associate of God's Lightning. The two of them have a good laugh about this, pocket the money and then start hunting the executives who hired her.

Ashleey Pinke

PL: 3

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 20 (+5)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1
Reflexes Save: 3 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Bluff 6 (+11), Intimidate 5 (+10), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 8 (+8), Notice 3 (+3), Performance (Dance) 8 (+13), Performance (Singing) 8 (+13)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Attractive, Distract (Linked to Performance: Singing), Fascinate (Linked to Performance: Dancing), Startle, Taunt

Generic Concert Security Guard

PL: 2

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3
Attack Bonus: 2 (1 with Ranged Attacks)
Defense: 2 **Toughness Save:** 2
Fortitude Save: 2 **Reflexes Save:** 2
Willpower Save: 2

Skills: Intimidate 7 (+9), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 5 (+5), Notice 4 (+6), Search 4 (+6)

Feats: Attack Focus (Melee), Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin

Equipment: Police Truncheon (Weapon, 3 damage)

**BITCHLEY
BITCH-BASTARD**



"Know why they call it gratuitous violence? Because it's violence you get as an extra or gratuity, over and above whatever violence you're owed. This for instance." POW! "That was a gift,

from me. I wasn't paid for that."

Real Name: Glynnis Boggs

PL: 10

Str: 30/14 (+10/+2) **Dex:** 20/16 (+5/+3)

Con: 16 (+3) **Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 18 (+4)

Cha: 16 (+3)

Initiative: 9 **Attack Bonus:** 10

Defense: 10

Toughness Save: 10 (7 Impervious)

Fortitude Save: 9 **Reflexes Save:** 11

Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Intimidate 10 (+13), Knowledge (Streetwise) 6 (+7), Notice 6 (+10), Search 3 (+7), Stealth 5 (+10)

Feats: Chokehold, Distract (Linked to Intimidate), Improved Aim, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Second Chance (Willpower Saves), Sneak Attack 2 (+3 Damage), Startle, Takedown Attack, Taunt, Toughness

Powers: Blast 10, Enhanced Dexterity 4, Enhanced Strength 16, Leaping 8, Protection 7 (Extra: Impervious), Super-Senses (Acute hearing, Blindsight [Radar], Darkvision, Infravision, Ultra-Hearing)

Complications: Compulsively violent, always looking for a fight, drawn irresistibly to destroy, kill and maim.

Drawbacks: Weakness (Drug addict—her need for heroin will trump all other considerations, including her own safety and the well-being of her teammates, should she find herself running low. In game terms the effect is Moderate, causing her to take a -1 on all rolls, and takes effect once per day), Weak Point (Critical Hits strike her remaining fleshy bits and completely bypass her Protection)

Background: A wild child from the streets of Londonderry in Northern Ireland, Glynnis Boggs fought for the Unionist Militias against the IRA since she was old enough to go to school. Even among the Militias she was known as a troublemaker, angry, savage, vicious and irresponsible. She could laugh at anything, no matter how horrible. She would push a baby carriage off the end of a pier, if you let her.

The British authorities never came down on the Unionists as hard as they did the IRA, but crazy psycho-killers like Glynnis

were hard to ignore. She wound up spending half her life in prison. While serving a sixty-year stint in the Special Unit at Broadmoor, she was offered a chance to reduce her sentence by participating in the super-secret Project Abbadon—the British Army's experimental combat cyborg program. Glynnis liked prison just fine, but Project Abbadon sounded interesting so she joined. It was a mistake. They replaced one of her arms, one of her hands, her legs and about half of her face. The pain involved in the recovery process was absolutely indescribable. She greatly enjoyed pain, but this was a bit much even for her.

Glynnis had a fun time with her physical therapy, killing and maiming technicians by “accident” while they tried to help her use her new bionic limbs. She liked the missions they sent her on even more. She got to kill more Irish people! She couldn't follow orders and did a lot of collateral damage, but before they could court-martial her or she could desert, the program was canceled. Glynnis was abruptly left at loose ends, broke and running low on painkillers. Still, she felt no resentment. Life's a laugh and so is death, as far as Glynnis is concerned.

She wreaked a little random havoc in Gibraltar, where the Brits cut her loose, and got locked up again. They weren't anxious to put her on trial and have the details of Project Abbadon come out, so they deported her to North Africa instead. Ever since then she's been a criminal for hire, willing to participate in the most sordid, despicable crimes for a lark and a little heroin money. She has to shoot an amazing amount of skag to keep the constant pain at bay, but she still always seems to have a smile on what's left of her face.

Adventures With Bitchley Bitch-Bastard: 1) Holiday in Rwanda

As Rwanda slid into bloody chaos, many of its leaders fled into exile. Now there is a whole expatriate diaspora of wealthy Tutsis and Hutus living in the suburbs of cities like Paris, Berlin and Dubuque, seething with unresolved anger. Their kids have begun to make war on one

another. How did this happen?

Theobald Bzimama is an idealistic, troubled young man with a lot of charisma and a craving for justice. His mother and father were moderate Hutus, well-educated members of Rwanda's diplomatic corps with no interest in killing Tutsis, and like most such people they were brutally murdered by their fellow Hutus when the country went berserk. Theo's aunt and uncle managed to get him out of the country to their home in Paris, where he has been quietly boiling with rage ever since.

Theo isn't bloodthirsty by nature. Kindhearted by nature, he is horrified by violence, but he also has a teenager's sense of outrage.

There are a lot of wealthy Hutus who still boast about the genocide and about having escaped unpunished, and they like to throw it in the faces of Tutsis and moderate Hutus when they meet them. There was no way to avoid this kind of abuse—the social circle Theo moves in is too small. So he has organized a group of his fellow exiles—the children of Tutsis, for the most part, to finally get justice for Rwanda's slaughtered dead.

They attack a group of teenagers from the other faction at a film festival on the French Riviera, and to their surprise they fight back with lethal savagery. Two of Theo's friends and one of the opposing Hutu kids die in the fracas, and now nothing can stop the coming avalanche of violence.

All across the world, well-dressed African youths with really expensive watches begin to murder one another on the playgrounds of their gated communities and by the side of the pool at expensive country clubs. Rwanda is everywhere, now. A lot of these young killers have diplomatic immunity and all of them have very good lawyers, complicating the matter.

The PCs get drawn into this baffling web of murder when they witness a gunfight at an expensive suburban mall—the kind of place where Saks 5th Avenue is the anchor store and twinkly classical music plays over the PA system.

Somewhere out there Theo sits in hiding, wishing he could stop the tide of blood he has unleashed. But before the PCs

can find him or put a stop to this business, some of his more radical followers find out that superheroes are now taking an interest in their unhappy little drama. They approach the Hutu kids on the other side, and agree to pool their trust fund money with them to hire a supervillain to keep the PCs occupied while they continue to make war on one another. Unfortunately for everyone, they hire Bitchley Bitch-Bastard. She is so amused by this assignment that not only will she attempt to keep the PCs from interfering, but will do her best to get in on the conflict and keep it going. She has a lot of experience in keeping pointless, bloody conflicts going—tha used to be her whole life, in fact.

If the PCs ask her how the kids can afford so much of her time, or if they offer more money to stay out of this, she laughs and says *"Oh, they ran out of money ages ago! I'm on holiday, now."*

Angry Tutsi or Hutu Kid

PL: 3

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2
Reflexes Save: 2 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Bluff 5 (+5), Intimidate 5 (+5), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+5), Languages (French, English, Bantu), Notice 4 (+6)

Feats: Connected, Quick Draw, Startle, Taunt, Tracking

Equipment: Expensive shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage)

Complications: Hates members of the other faction with a murderous passion.

2) Cops Always Want One for Free

A frightened security guard brings a videotape to the Player Characters. It shows Bitchley Bitch-Bastard beating up a prominent local businessman in the parking lot of the office building where he works. We'll leave the businessman's identity open, to make him easier to work into your campaign. If the PCs know him personally, they should regard him as powerful, arrogant and bad-tempered, difficult to approach. He's rich enough that he actually

owns the building.

The guard was the only one monitoring the cameras that night and when he saw what was happening, he called the police and rushed to his boss' aid. He reached the scene just as Bitchley Bitch-Bastard was leaving.

When the guard told him that the police were on their way, the businessman became enraged and threatened to have him fired if he didn't destroy the security tape. When the police arrived, the businessman sent them away, claiming that that there had been a misunderstanding. Frightened, puzzled and convinced that Bitchley Bitch-Bastard must be blackmailing his boss, the security guard ran to the PCs with the tape.

And this is where things start to get weird. Even though that tape was only made last night the footage has already been circulating on the Internet for weeks. At least, it appears to have been. There is a clip floating around of somebody who looks a lot like Bitchley Bitch-Bastard stomping the living bejeezus out of a man in a suit and tie. The beating looks identical. She does exactly the same things to him in the same sequence. Yet on closer examination, it's not the same man. Nor does it appear to be the same camera angle, or the same parking lot.

Last night's victim is completely unwilling to cooperate with the PCs in any way. If they approach him, he's quite obnoxious and if any female PCs are present he will be especially insulting and offensive to them, trying to pick a fight with them for no apparent reason. He insists that nothing happened last night, even though they can see the bruises on his face. If the PCs threaten to mention this matter to his wife, he abruptly caves in and tells them everything.

Here's what's really going on. Ever since that footage started circulating on the internet, rich guys have been paying Bitchley Bitch-Bastard enormous sums of money to kick the crap out of them. Most of them want her to do exactly what she did to the victim in the clip to them. By now she's done it enough times that she's actually set up a subroutine in her cybernetic limbs to

administer the correct beating automatically.

The PCs might be in a position to catch her in the act. If one of them can pose as a rich degenerate and pay her to stomp them, the other PC's might be able to set an ambush, overpower her and bring her up on assault charges. It's not even entrapment if someone who isn't a police officer does it. Alas, if the PCs capture her, a dignified old judge with fading bruises on his face sets her bail ridiculously low and she walks.

Unbeknownst to the PCs, one of Bitchley Bitch-Bastard's clients died from his beating. She will be in serious trouble if her scheme comes to light. Whether or not the PCs manage to get her arrested, Bitchley Bitch-Bastard decides that the authorities are getting too close and that it's time to tie off the loose ends. The security guard and the PCs both qualify as loose ends. So does the fool who got caught on his own building's security camera, and then let the tape fall into the hands of superheroes. She invites him to have one for free and even though he's pretty sure she's going to kill him (this time the beating won't stop) he shows up anyway. It's just too exciting for him to resist.

For his sake, let's hope the PCs are having him trailed. If they can catch her giving him a really serious injury, they might be able to make the charges stick this time. It should also be pretty satisfying to watch.

3) A Labor of Love

A famous superhero called Doctor Oculus contacts the PCs. He needs to see them on an urgent matter and he's willing to blow his secret identity to do it. This should come as a shock to the PCs. Dr. Oculus is a legendary recluse, a shadowy, enigmatic figure who many people think is an urban legend. He doesn't join teams, he doesn't cooperate with other superheroes or the law. No one has any idea where his secret headquarters might be or where he gets the fantastic devices (most of them related to vision or to shooting beams out of his eyes) that he uses to fight crime. In fact, once the PCs stop to think about it, they can't recall anyone having even seen him in public for the past three years. What could

be so urgent that he'd give the PCs his home address? A lawyer escorts the PCs to Dr. Oculus' home. Either it's the quiet suburban residence of a crippled professor whom one of the PCs knows in their secret identity (perhaps he's their next door neighbor!) or else it's the top three floors of a beautiful art deco skyscraper that the PCs drive past all the time. Use whichever works best for your campaign. It should be somewhere totally unexpected and weirdly familiar, in any case. If it's at all possible, he should be someone the PCs already know.

When the PCs arrive at Doctor Oculus' secret lair, they find that he's very drunk. He's also a cripple. Which brings him to his reasons for calling in the PCs. Three years ago he got into a fight with some well-known supervillain (use whoever would work best in your campaign) and took a permanent spinal injury. He's been confined to a wheelchair ever since. He has some devices that help him simulate normal movement in his secret identity, but he can't even run, let alone fight crime.

"It's not easy" he says *"going from being so much more than a man to so much less."*

He thinks his girlfriend has started seeing other men. In fact he's become obsessed with the idea. It torments his every waking moment, he explains. Last week he worked himself up into such a rage over it that he hired a sleazy mob lawyer named Don Fink to find the worst, cruelest supervillain possible, and pay them to kill everyone his girl has ever loved. Mr. Fink somehow got in touch with Bitchley Bitch-Bastard. The next day Doctor Oculus sobered up, repented and tried to call the whole thing off. Bitchley Bitch-Bastard sent back the money, along with Don Fink's severed hand and a note which read *"We'll make this a labor of love, then."*

There's no way to call it off, no way to even contact the assassin (the rest of Mr. Fink has disappeared). The PCs have to tail his girlfriend and stop Bitchley Bitch-Bastard before she kills anyone. He has a copy of the death list for them. Unfortunately, it includes vague items like *"whoever that slut is betraying me with now"* and *"whoever*

that slut betrayed me with first" as well as more specific targets like his girlfriend's mother, her dog, the boy she dated in Junior High, her favorite elementary school teacher, etc.

After Doctor Oculus gives them the list he puts his head down on the table, mumbles the word "*Justice*" and begins to snore. And then he dies. He already took the poison before the PCs arrived. If you think it would be more dramatic to have him wheel himself into the next room, yell "*justice*" and shoot himself in the head, by all means do it, but be warned that most PCs will guess what he's up to and try to stop him, which can ruin the drama if they succeed.

Dr. Oculus' girlfriend is Rona Romita, girl reporter, an obnoxious, pushy journalist whom the PCs have encountered before (if it's at all possible to work that into the plot). She's capable of doing unethical things on the job, but she never cheated on Doctor Oculus. In fact, if it's possible for the GM to add this detail in advance, she once turned down a PC who asked her for a date and told him that she was already seeing someone.

How can the PC's explain the situation to her? She'll never believe that her boyfriend could have done such a thing—he's the only pure, decent person in her life, as far as she's concerned. With or without her cooperation, how can the PCs protect all the people on the list without knowing which one Bitchley Bitch-Bastard intends to kill first?

Doctor Oculus

PL: 10

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 7 **Attack Bonus:** 10
Defense: 10 (3 if unable to dodge)
Toughness Save: 8 (3 if unable to dodge)
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 9
Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+9), Climb 6 (+8), Concentration 9 (+13), Craft (Chemical) 8 (+12), Craft (Electronics) 10 (+14), Craft (Mechanical) 10 (+14), Gather Information 6 (+10), Investigate 5 (+9), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+5), Knowledge (Art) 4

(+8), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 10 (+14), Knowledge (Technology) 12 (+16), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 4 (+8), Notice 15 (+19), Sense Motive 3 (+7)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Attractive, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 5, Dodge Focus 7, Improved Aim, Improved Initiative, Inventor, Precise Shot

Powers: Device (Wonder-Vision Visor; Hard to Lose; Blast 10 [Power Feat: Alternate Power: Visual Dazzle 10], Super-Senses 16, [Blindsight, Darkvision, Extended Vision 2, Infravision, Microscopic Vision 3, Ultra-Vision, X-Ray Vision]

Equipment: Headquarters (see below)

Headquarters: Secret Lab

Size: Small

Toughness: 10

Features: Communications, Computer, Concealed, Fire Prevention System, Infirmary, Laboratory, Library, Security System, Workshop

Complications: Bitter and mad with jealousy. Thinks he's a useless cripple. Hates cripples. Irrationally obsessed with the idea that his girlfriend must be cheating on him.

Drawback: Disabled (can't walk, confined to a wheelchair).

Rona Romita, Girl Reporter

PL: 3

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 0 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 3 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Diplomacy 3 (+6), Gather Information 6 (+9), Intimidate 6 (+9), Knowledge (Civics) 5 (+7), Knowledge (Current Events) 4 (+6), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 5 (+7), Notice 3 (+3), Profession (Reporter) 6 (+8), Search 5 (+8)

Feats: Attractive, Distract (Linked to Bluff), Second Chance (with Gather Information), Startle, Taunt

THE GUDGE BROTHERS



"Please mister, if you don't give my brother a quid he's liable to go kill a dog. I couldn't bear it, to see another poor doggie suffer."

Real Name: Ian Gudge
PL: 9

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 32 (+12)
Int: 8 (-1) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus (Melee):** 6
Attack Bonus (Ranged): 4 **Defense:** 0
Toughness Save: 12 (Impervious, is Immune to lethal physical damage)
Fortitude Save: 12 but doesn't normally make Fortitude Saves—see "Powers"
Reflexes Save: 0 **Willpower Save:** -1

Skills: Bluff 6 (+10), Diplomacy 6 (+10), Profession (Beggar) 8 (+7)

Feats: Attack Focus (Melee) 2, Diehard, Endurance, Improved Grapple, Interpose

Powers: Absorption 12 (absorbs energy damage, converts it to Healing), Immunity 49 (to all Lethal Physical Damage, and to all Fortitude Effects except Fatigue), Protection 12 (Extra: Impervious), Regeneration 26

(+10 to Constitution Checks to recover from damage, makes rolls to recover from being Bruised, Staggered or unconscious once per round)

Complications: Barely understands anything happening around him, is desperate to conceal this fact.

Background: Ian Gudge never had much upstairs, but he was always good at getting himself liked. He wasn't smart enough to get a job or an education, but his talent for saying the right thing at the right time kept him and his brother sleeping indoors almost half the time.

The Gudge boys were twins, born in Hong Kong. Their father was a cab driver who had come to the city from the slums of East London, their mom was a local girl, of mixed Indian-Arab parentage. Mr. Gudge was a hard man, with little time, money or patience for his witless sons. When they were both nineteen and had neither jobs nor prospects, he threw them out of the apartment despite their mother's pleas. They lived with their grandmother after that, playing on her sympathies for a little food and a place to sleep. Then she died.

Hong Kong is not a forgiving place to be a failure and it's even worse to be homeless. Cops are brutal, support services are scant. There are no good places to hide on the island city itself—no spot which isn't full of people, day or night, and a brief trip to the Kowloon suburbs on the mainland left the Gudge brothers confused and terrified. Unable to find a good place to hide, they found a bad one.

The Lin-Feng warehouse of is one of the few places in Hong Kong's giant Sea-Land cargo terminal where people seldom go. Most of the docks and warehouses in the terminal buzz with constant activity—this is the second busiest port on earth. Yet Lin-Feng remains empty, silent and neglected. No one goes in or out unless they absolutely have to. And if you knew what they kept inside, you wouldn't want to go in there either.

It doesn't make much sense to sleep in a toxic waste storage site, but then the Gudge Brothers never had much sense. Unknown to most people, the Lin-Feng warehouse is still leased by the British

Government, long after Hong-Kong itself has been handed over to China. It's where they keep the entire known supply of a horrendous biological weapon called "bio-warp." Bio-Warp is what is known a re-sequencing agent. A tailored virus, it scrambles the target's DNA, turning them into something else. It seldom kills its victims but often leaves them wishing they were dead. It also has a way of unpredictably giving targets superhuman abilities (although it's just as likely to turn you into something that has to live in a tank).

The Gudges might actually have survived the episode unscathed, but they spent their fourth night in the warehouse smashing canisters out of boredom and frustration. After a day or so of lying on the warehouse floor, twitching and mutating, they emerged from the transformation process virtually indestructible. No one has yet found anything that can hurt them in any kind of serious way. Yet they still feel pain, heat, cold, thirst and hunger, even though these things can't harm them anymore.

It took Ian quite a while to figure out how to exploit their new abilities. For years they lived by begging and petty scams, always in fear of the police, always hungry, often arrested. Ian's knack for getting sympathy served them well at first, although as life on the street made them increasingly brutal and mean, it got harder for Ian to make the right kind of impression. And although they looked almost normal at first, as time went on their skin began to turn a very odd shade and texture.

Homelessness was not an existence they had the mental ability to cope with. The Gudge twins are mentally disabled and unlikely to flourish in anything but a carefully structured setting. Only the fact that they were effectively indestructible kept them from dying many times over.

Once Ian found a kind-hearted old lady who was willing to take them in. Alas, by then the Gudge Brothers were so rough and hostile from years of living on the street that she changed her mind after a day and turned them out again.

It took three years for them to hit

on the scheme that made them famous and eventually sent them to prison. In 1994, a year after the incident at the Lin-Feng warehouse, Ian somehow figured out that they could make money by letting guys in bars beat them up. For a few Yuan in cash or the price of a drink, anyone who wanted to could beat on either or both Gudge Brothers to their heart's content. After a few months it occurred to Ian to charge extra for beatings with belts, pool cues, tire irons, etc.

Two years later Ian was hit by a car while crossing the street. It didn't hurt him, of course, but he did a good job of looking hurt and pathetic. The driver, anxious to avoid a blot on his record, gave Ian the equivalent of three hundred dollars in cash on the spot. After that, the Gudge Brothers made most of their money from jumping in front of vehicles and collecting money from the drivers. Ian's talent for looking meek and pitiable served them very well here. For a time they slept indoors as often as not.

At first it was impossible for the police to believe that anyone could actually be running a scam like this (letting cars hit them for money? Be serious! Who could need a few hundred dollars that badly?) But Hong Kong is not a large enough place for someone to get away with such a spectacular, showy scam forever. They were apprehended, yet again, and this time their powers were given serious study.

It was 1996, and Hong Kong was still a colony of the British Empire. If they had been caught a year later, after the city became a part of China, the Gudge Brothers might have been inducted into a clandestine military unit or even been experimented on. Instead they were sent to a secret prison for super-criminals on the Andaman Islands, and then forgotten about.

The facility in the Andamans was falling into disuse as the British Commonwealth slowly retreated from the Far East. By the time God's Lightning rescued them last year, the Gudge Brothers were the only prisoners there.

God's Lightning found out about the Andaman Islands facility and that it contained a pair of very special super-criminals. It caught his imagination. What

kind of parahumans would be so powerful and dangerous that they would require their own prison? Clearly they should join his team. He also believes in some improbable conspiracy theory about Zionism, and he thinks the existence of the secret prison somehow confirms it (the details are too complicated and annoying to go into here).

The Gudge Brothers have been a bit of a disappointment to God's Lightning, but he's too busy patting himself on the back over his coup to be able to admit it to himself. He's also flattered by Ian's ingratiating ways.

For his part, Ian Gudge is only too grateful to have found a place for himself and his brother to sleep, a never-ending source of food they can eat, friends who will protect them and so forth. He has told God's Lightning all about the Lin-Feng warehouse and the location of the bio-warp.

In the years that they spent in prison, their appearance has become steadily less normal, but Ian doesn't fully realize this. If he somehow got separated from the team, he would go back to trying to look meek and pitiable, in hopes that some kind person would give him money or let him sleep on their floor. This would not work nearly as well, now that he's blatantly parahuman.

Strangely, no one ever seems to have noticed that Ian Gudge has an IQ of about 85, and that his brother Neville is dumber still. They've done a good job of concealing it. Ian does the talking for both of them, and he keeps his mouth shut whenever he doesn't understand something. He's afraid that someone will find out that he's stupid and take advantage of him once they do. He talks to Neville a lot, but he only speaks to other people when he sees a chance to ingratiate himself with them. While he isn't articulate, he has a natural talent for bootlicking that continues to serve him well.

Ian is always scared. Scared of saying something stupid, afraid that he's forgotten some important detail, desperate to be liked and sure that his survival depends on it. He lives by his wits, and he's painfully aware that he doesn't have enough of them. He's never killed anybody, but he's

capable of murder if he gets frightened or frustrated enough.

Adventures With Ian Gudge: Look out for Falling Gudges

A new prime minister takes power in a small African nation renowned for its diamond mines. Prime Minister Otinka is a reformer and a long-time advocate of democratization. Unfortunately, he also opposes the interests of the big diamond mining firms, who are trying to do everything in their power to disrupt his new regime.

His new Minister of Justice, Dr. Kenneth Mfuzi is presently a professor of Law at the University of Chicago, and will have to be flown across the Atlantic to take up his cabinet post. Wargtimmen gets hired to make sure he never reaches Africa alive.

This is exactly the kind of mission Jack Briggs loves—fighting the forces of Communism (he thinks Prime Minister Otinka is a Communist because he's critical of the big diamond firms), fighting against African self-rule, pulling off an impossible, spectacular hit at thirty-thousand feet. It's the kind of work that he believes he was born to do.

The US State Department gets wind of the fact that there may be a plot against Dr. Mfuzi's life, but they don't have the authorization to protect him, so they get in touch with the PCs on an informal basis and ask them to accompany Dr. Mfuzi on his flight.

The GM can play this any of a number of different ways. The Dept of State can arrange to give them false passports, airline tickets, and then seat them next to Dr. Mfuzi. Or they can officially assign the PCs as his bodyguards or some combination of both. Do whatever works best for this particular team of heroes.

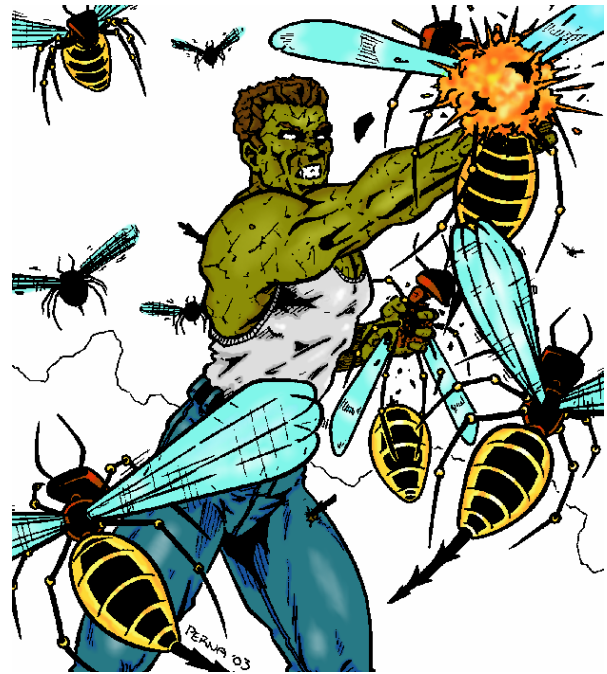
Give them a chance to meet Dr. Mfuzi and talk to him. He's a charming fellow, good-humored and polite. A giant of a man, he used to be on his country's Olympic weightlifting team, and PCs who were former Olympians may actually have met him back in those days. Make sure they like him and want to save him by the

time things get nasty.

Everyone getting on this flight has been scanned with particular care, so Jack Briggs has sent an assassin who doesn't need a weapon—Ian Gudge. Young Mr. Gudge has conceived a novel approach to this job. He will grab the target, open the plane's emergency hatch, and dive out with the struggling Doctor trapped in his arms. Ian can survive a thirty-thousand foot fall. The new Minister of Justice surely cannot.

Because he doesn't want to risk getting lost in the ocean (one of his worst fears) Ian will attack Dr. Mfuzi on his first flight, from Chicago to New York. The plane is somewhere over Ohio when he comes lumbering and blinking up out of Coach. The Flight attendants tell him he isn't supposed to be there, and he gets confused and goes back to his seat. Then he returns a few minutes later and asks if he can use their toilet. The flight attendants attempt to send him away again, but this time he's determined to carry out his mission. Rattled by the flight attendants' scolding, he grabs the wrong passenger—a minor rap singer who happens to be riding on the same flight, and dives off the plane with him. All the air gets explodes out of the plane, the pilot starts to lose control and everyone starts screaming.

The PCs will have to somehow rescue the plummeting rapper from Ian Gudge and prevent a plane crash at the same time. If you need another complication, perhaps a flight attendant or two gets sucked out of the airliner and will also need to be rescued. If it's still too easy for your PCs, the pilot and copilot both pass out from the lack of air. And if you like, perhaps Jack Briggs is sitting in Coach, unarmed, in civilian clothes, ready to come kill Dr. Mfuzi with his bare hands once enough of the PCs get distracted or leave the airliner. But he doesn't count on the target being an Olympic Weightlifter...



"Gudge! Heh heh huh huh!"

Real Name: Neville Gudge

PL: 9

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 32 (+12)

Int: 6 (-2) **Wis:** 7 (-2) **Cha:** 8 (-1)

Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus (Melee):** 7

Attack Bonus (Ranged): 3 **Defense:** 1

Toughness Save: 12 (Impervious, is Immune to lethal physical damage)

Fortitude Save: 12 but doesn't normally make Fortitude Saves—see "Powers"

Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** -2

Skills: None.

Feats: All-Out Attack, Attack Focus (Melee) 4, Diehard, Endurance

Powers: Absorption 12 (absorbs energy damage, converts it to Healing), Immunity 49 (to all Lethal Physical Damage, and to all Fortitude Effects except Fatigue), Protection 12 (Extra: Impervious), Regeneration 26 (+10 to Constitution Checks to recover from damage, makes rolls to recover from being Bruised, Staggered or unconscious once per round)

Complications: Incredibly dumb, incapable of caring for himself. Does whatever Ian says when he's around, gets into trouble at once if he's not there.

Background: People often think that because the Gudge Brothers are twins, they are a matched set of thugs, identical in everything like big ugly bookends. This is not the case. Neville Gudge is more mentally impaired than his brother, quieter, stronger and a whole lot meaner.

Ian can read at a second grade level. Neville is completely illiterate. Ian might kill if he were cornered or afraid. Neville is a sadist who has killed two people already (no one knows this but Ian) and tortures animals any time he can get one within reach.

He's about as dumb as a chimp and about as vicious. Yet he knows Ian is the key to his survival and he'll do whatever Ian says. He loves his brother and he'd feel utterly lost without him. This has kept him from going on a rampage for years. Passive and resentful by nature, Neville almost never speaks and always follows Ian's lead.

His cruelty is an impulsive, disorganized thing. He might torture someone for kicks, but he wouldn't do it to get information from them. He wouldn't consciously set out to take a hostage, but he might try to hide behind some poor frightened bystander in a fight.

He follows Ian's instructions fairly well and Ian knows to follow orders, so Neville isn't totally hopeless on the battlefield. God's Lightning usually deploys the Gudge Brothers to block enemy fire or create a diversion, rather than as shock troops. If he's allowed to decide for himself, Neville likes to attack targets directly, ripping and rending and biting at them with no more sense of fair play than a wild animal would have.

Both Gudge boys are very strong, but not superhumanly so. This may change as the bio-warp in their tissues continues to slowly transfigure them.

Adventures With Neville Gudge:

1) Little Lost Gudge

Neville Gudge gets lost. Frightened and unsure what to do once his brother isn't here to guide him, he wanders into the PCs' home town. He eats some pigeons in the park, threatens some bums for no good reason, kills a dog and then starts throwing

himself in front of cars in a frustrated rage. The PCs could encounter him at any point in his mini-rampage, from the moment he first bites the head off a pigeon to the point where he's caroming around in traffic.

It's probably most dramatic if they arrive at the park just in time to see him kicking the dog to death. The dog's owner is screaming, the poor beast whimpers and yelps on the ground. About thirty feet away, a group of homeless men struggle to restrain Neville Gudge. As the PCs arrive he tears his way loose from them, runs up to the dog and gives it another kick. It yelps louder and the bums try to drag him away again. *"Dog!"* he yells in triumph.

Whenever he spots the PCs, Neville starts hurling himself into traffic, causing accidents and collateral damage as the cars knock him one way and another. If the PCs don't stop him in time, he'll jump off a freeway overpass and create some real havoc as vehicles swerve into one another, trying to avoid him while he bounces around like a pinball from the impacts. Once they capture him, the PCs may find that Neville's vocabulary is too limited for them to question him effectively. All he will say is *"Gudge"* or *"Dog! Heh-heh Huh-huh!"*

Then, without warning, he becomes unexpectedly coherent. *"Gudge!"* he mumbles in his thick Cockney accent *"My brother. He's coming, he is. Soon, yeh! Hour of the Beast."* He's not capable of elaborating—that's the most he's said at one time in years.

Neville is telling the truth. Ian and the rest of Wargtimmen are on their way to rescue him right now.

2) Sludge of Gudge

Wargtimmen is on an extremely secret pre-dawn mission in the PCs' home city, when disaster strikes the team. The Bio-Warp seeping through Neville Gudge's tissues abruptly mutates him further, turning him into a huge, violent, indestructible glob of goo. He begins to run amok downtown, and the rest of his team isn't able to get him under control before the PCs arrive at the scene.

It's vital that this mission remain secret, so as soon as the PCs draw near the

rest of the team melts back into the shadows and leaves Neville to his fate. Ian Gudge protests this vigorously (the only time he has ever stood up to his teammates about anything) but to no avail. No one is supposed to know they are here, and that trumps all other considerations, as far as God's Lightning is concerned.

The PCs will have to battle the gloppy new Mr. Gudge into submission before the city begins to wake up and thousands of innocent civilians are put at risk. Rush hour hasn't begun yet, but once it does, the streets will be clogged with vast numbers of innocent victims.

Here are some stats for the new, improved Neville Gudge. He's not as indestructible as he was before (in particular he's a whole lot more vulnerable to energy attacks without his Absorption), but he's still plenty dangerous.

The Brand-New Neville Gudge



PL: 10

Str: 35 (+12) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 20 (+5)

Int: 6 (-2) **Wis:** 7 (-2) **Cha:** 0 (-5)

Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 5

Defense: 0

Toughness Save: 12 (Impervious, is Immune to lethal physical damage)

Fortitude Save: 12 but doesn't normally make Fortitude Saves—see "Powers"

Reflexes Save: 0 **Willpower Save:** -2

Powers: Additional Limbs 4 (can shape up to ten of them from his gooey mass), Elongation 7, Growth 12 (Size: Gargantuan; Grapple Modifier: 12; Stealth Modifier: -12; Intimidation Modifier: 6; Space: 20 feet; Reach: 15 feet; Extras: Innate, Flaw: Permanent) Immunity 49 (to all Lethal Physical Damage, and to all Fortitude Effects

except Fatigue), Protection 12 (Extra: Impervious), Regeneration 26 (+10 to Constitution Checks to recover from damage, makes rolls to recover from being Bruised, Staggered or Unconscious once per round)

Drawbacks: Disabled (Mute; Common, Minor), Hideous (Common, Moderate)

If he is captured, Neville's condition can be reversed by a gadgeteer or super-scientist, but this will take time, equipment and skill rolls. All the while, he will struggle and fight and try to escape confinement. The process of studying him may, at the GM's discretion, reveal all kinds of things about the British Bio-Warp program, and potentially get the PCs in all sorts of trouble with British Intelligence.

Meanwhile, Ian deserts his team and comes to rescue his brother. If he fails (and he probably will) then he will try to ingratiate himself with the PCs and try to wheedle them into letting Neville go. He's willing to reveal any of his team's secrets. Unfortunately, he's too dumb to understand very many of them.

THE HOODED SKULL



***"No one should have to die alone.
That's the beautiful thing about
weapons of mass destruction."***

Real Name: Francis Gerald Hargreaves
PL: 9

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus:** 9
Defense: 9 (4 if caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 8 (1 if caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 6 **Reflexes Save:** 7 **Willpower Save:** 11

Skills: Bluff 14 (+16), Diplomacy 14 (+16)
Disable Device 14 (+18), Escape Artist 14 (+18), Intimidate 12 (+14), Knowledge (Current Events) 5 (+9), Knowledge (Streetwise) 10 (+14), Knowledge (Technology) 8 (+12), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 2 (+6), Languages (French, Indonesian), Notice 14 (+19), Perform (Oratory) 14 (+16), Search 12 (+17), Sense Motive 14 (+19), Stealth 10 (+14)

Feats: Assessment, Defensive Roll 7,

Distract (Linked to Bluff), Dodge Focus 5, Elusive Target, Evasion 2, Improved Defense, Improvised Tools, Inspire, Leadership, Master Plan, Second Chance 2 (Willpower Saving Throws, interaction results), Startle, Taunt

Background: Last of the hooded master villains, F. G. Hargreaves is an arch-criminal because he's never wanted to be anything else.

He's British, upper-middle class—the son of a London stockbroker, and speaks with a posh accent that his family has painstakingly acquired over the past three generations. It's one of his greatest assets, that carefully cultivated voice. It makes people assume that he knows about everything from fine wines to the cash value of renaissance paintings, that he has inherited wealth and vast resources, or at least a former career in MI-6. His accent makes henchmen trust his leadership and partners trust his advice. Most people would be shocked to learn that he never attended college. The truth is that he has little apart from his magnificent voice and the proceeds of his last crime. Everyone seems to assume he's in his forties, but in fact he's only twenty-eight.

Yet the Hooded Skull is remarkably capable criminal, who has planned and executed some of the most elaborate and outrageous crimes in the past hundred years. He robs gold shipments and steals Old Masters from the vaults of aged Nazis and removes huge diamonds from the treasure hoards of Middle Eastern kings. Not a front-line thief or combatant, he plans and organizes huge, complex capers which always seem to run like clockwork. As a measure of his success, he has no criminal record at all.

His origins are simple. Young Francis Hargreaves dreamed of being a dashing, romantic master criminal. He paid attention to nothing but this one driving ambition, molding his whole life around it. One day when he was seventeen he put his first master plan in action, walking into a dangerous pub in the East End and recruiting six hardened thugs on the basis of nothing but his personal charm and scary

demeanor. He claimed to be working for an unseen arch-criminal called the Hooded Skull, to his enormous shock they believed him. A week later they pulled off the biggest jewel heist in English history.

Francis vanished into the night and never bothered to contact his family again. For the next eleven years it's been one incredible crime after another. When he turned twenty-five he decided that he had enough gravitas to start playing the role of the Hooded Skull himself, instead of pretending to be his chief henchman. It's all been so much easier than he expected.

The Hooded Skull got this far by sheer willpower, and he has a lot of it. Physically brave for a master villain, he has an extraordinarily high tolerance for pain and seems unafraid of death or mutilation. He could easily hold his hand in a candle flame until it sizzled like a steak, although he's never seen any reason to try. But although he experiences little fear or pain, he will avoid imprisonment at all costs. Boredom is his greatest enemy and crime is the only thing that distracts him from it. He'd go insane in a cell, he's sure of it.

God's Lightning had heard of the Hooded Skull and was lucky enough to find him in Singapore, between jobs. The Skull was willing to listen to the offer, as he was running low on cash and starting to fear that he might have entered a slow patch. He's only been with the team for a few months and he's already starting to regret it.

His personality leaves something to be desired. Suspicious and reserved, he makes a point of never getting close to anyone. He's also vengeful and mean, never forgetting a slight, however small. He goes out of his way to be unpleasant to people, constantly sniping, criticizing and making caustic remarks. That's not a safe thing to do around someone like Bitchley Bitch-Bastard, of course, but fortunately for him she finds him amusing. He feels utter contempt for rich idiots, vulgar low-class proles, middle-class poseurs, trendy young fools, stupid old frumps, children, adults, men, women and everyone else on earth. He has no idea what's on television and he'll think you're a moron if he senses that you

do.

Yet he is really more of a hedonist than an active sadist. Crime amuses him, but he would be shocked by really wanton savagery. He probably wouldn't kill an unarmed opponent and he would certainly be appalled at the prospect of killing noncombatants. He might torture someone for information, but he wouldn't do it for fun. For the most part he avoids putting himself in situations where he would have to do messy things like that.

None of this meshes well with God's Lightning's style, let alone Bitchley Bitch-Bastard's. Over the past few months the Hooded Skull has seen some disturbing things, but he hasn't yet been on a combat assignment with the rest of the team, so he hasn't had a chance to find out just how savage they are. When he does find out, he'll consider leaving the team, but develop the awful suspicion that they wouldn't let him leave alive. From this moment on he'll be looking for a way to betray God's Lightning in the most heinous way possible, and he may try to use the PCs to do it.

Adventures With the Hooded Skull: Old Wine in New Bottles

God's Lightning tells the Hooded Skull to come up with a plan—*"Something classy."* He's brought a White Thunder hit squad up from South America to help out and there's a weapon he's been saving up for a special occasion like this one.

The Hooded Skull casts about for something that wouldn't disappoint God's Lightning. It's always dangerous when the boss gets this excited about a plan. It's important that it live up to his expectations.

The Hooded Skull notices that some bottles of Chateau Lafitte Rothschild 1945 have come up for sale on EBay. Stealing them would be exactly the right kind of crime. The first step will be to find the seller's home address. That's easy enough—he buys one of the bottles. As he expected, the address listed is a law firm that handles the anonymous seller's personal affairs. They're in a very posh neighborhood in the Player Characters' home city.

The Hooded Skull has God's

Lightning assemble the troops on the deck of the yacht and he explains the mission to them. They are going to liberate a case of Chateau Lafitte Rothschild '45, not because it is worth a king's ransom, he says, but because a vintage of that quality is wasted on its current owner, who lacks the sophistication to properly appreciate it.

Here a member of the hit squad (his name is Enrique "Ricky" Ochoa) clears his throat uncomfortably and asks *"wasn't '45 a mediocre year for Chateau Lafitte?"*

In fact the Hooded Skull has no idea, he doesn't really know that much about fine wines, so he decides to bluff his way out. *"Yes,"* he says *"You're thinking of Chateau La Tour '45. But if there's anything else you know nothing about that you'd like to explain to me, please feel free."*

To the Hooded Skull's shock and horror, God's Lightning flies into a rage and kills poor Ricky Ochoa on the spot. Then he hands the Skull Ricky's head, with his apologies. *"That,"* he says to the rest of the team *"Is what we do to rude and vulgar persons that got no class."*

Bitchley Bitch-Bastard giggles and the Hooded Skull begins to rethink his career options.

A bit of internet research confirms that Ricky Ochoa was right about Chateau Lafitte '45. This is not good. What will God's Lightning when he finds out that he's been made a fool of? The Hooded Skull doesn't fear death very much, but this seems like such a sordid, silly, pointless way to meet his end. He conceives a counter-plan.

As it happens, Chateau LaTour '45 is as prized as Chateau Lafitte is indifferent for that same year. He's almost certain that the buyer is an English Baronet named Prescott Cogswell, who has long since been exiled from polite society in Britain (he has some unappetizing personal habits that we needs not go into here) and who lives in exile like a recluse in a huge, fortified mansion in the PCs' home city. The Hooded Skull breaks into the law firm and confirms this. He will hit Baron Cogswell before the rest of the team has a chance to, and swap the labels on the bottles in his cellar from Chateau LaTour to Chateau Lafitte. He reasons correctly that few people have ever tasted

either one. He should be able to bluff his way into getting the buyer to taste the wine, and when they discover how good it actually is, he can say: *"If anyone tells you that Lafitte '45 is a mediocre vintage, then they've made a grave error."* This should also get a good laugh out of God' Lightning.

The PCs find themselves confronted with a baffling series of events. First, the infamous Hooded Skull is sighted in town. What can this mean? They've heard of him of course, but doesn't he mostly confine his activities to the far side of the Pacific Rim.

Then someone breaks into the offices of one of the oldest and most prestigious law firms in the city. They stole nothing, but they seem to have rummaged through some files on a client named Prescott Cogswell, Third Baronet of Duncaster on the Wold. At least one of the PCs has heard of him—he lives in a big spooky mansion just off downtown. Weird guy, Baron Cogswell. Keeps to himself. Doesn't associate with people who aren't members of the British Aristocracy, and of course there aren't any of them around.

Whoever went through the files seems to have been interested in Cogswell's recent efforts to liquidate some of his wine collection. The Baronet isn't in financial difficulties, he's just consolidating the collection to make room for new acquisitions. The firm doesn't want to involve the police, who they are convinced would bungle this matter, so they bring in the PCs to consult. It was a masterful burglary, truly superb.

Then someone breaks into Prescott Cogswell's mansion. They don't take a thing (in fact this is where the Hooded Skull switches the labels on the bottles). Mr. Cogswell was out of town and no one was harmed during the break-in. The lawyers get the PCs access to the mansion and permit the PCs to study the scene of the crime. While counting the bottles to make sure none are missing, a PC discovers that someone has left an extra bottle on the shelf. There is a sheet from last week's personals ads inside. Someone has circled the heading for the section *"Other Seeks Other"* and written the word *"Saturday"* beside it. There will indeed be a message

for the PCs in the personals on Saturday, in the *"Other Seeks Other"* section. But first, something big happens.

On Friday night, there is another break-in at the Cogswell Mansion. This one is much more brutal and direct. God's Lightning and Bitchley Bitch-Bastard storm the house with the White Thunder team, while the Gudge Brothers create a diversion on a nearby street. Baron Cogswell is still out of town, but he has got wind of the fact that someone intends him harm, and he has hired a bunch of security goons to protect his mansion, as well as the famous mercenary supervillain/bodyguard known as Harlequin 9. The PCs should arrive at the tail end of the ensuing firefight. The White Thunder team is still shooting it out with Cogswell's goons, but Wargtimmen has already made its escape with the bottles.

On Saturday, an ad appears in the Personals column, under *"Other Seeks Other,"* requesting a meeting at an exclusive private club which the PCs aren't members of. There is a false name that they can use to identify themselves to the club's staff if they don't go in costume.

If a PC checks this lead out, they are welcomed at the club and invited to have a seat in the lounge, where a steward brings them a glass of Chateau Lafitte Rothschild '45 and a package on a silver tray. The parcel contains a cell phone, which rings. It's the Hooded Skull. *"Not very good, is it?"* he asks. *"For a Chateau Lafitte."* He tells them the whole story. The only thing he leaves out is the location of Wargtimmen's secret lair. He's even honest about the fact that he doesn't really know much about wine.

Wargtimmen is going to sell the wine to an American software billionaire who is hopefully too crass to know that this isn't such a prized vintage. In case he does know, the Hooded Skull would like the Player Characters to crash the party and disrupt the sale before the buyer has a chance to hear what specific year the wine came from. As an absolute last-ditch backup, the wine is actually Chateau LaTour '45, which tastes amazing (or so he understands from what he's read—frankly it all tastes kind of the same to him).

In fact the Hooded Skull has gone to all this trouble for nothing. The buyer doesn't know Bordeaux from Merlot—he just thinks it's dangerous and romantic to buy fine wine from a supervillain. He'll have bodyguards of his own present at the meeting, which will take place tonight, at this very club. If the GM wants to make it really dramatic, fudge the timetable and have the Hooded Skull explain that actually the meeting will take place in one of the private rooms upstairs any minute now. Is there time to assemble the team and get them here? Or should the PC try to stop Wargtimmen on his or her own?

The buyer has brought bodyguards to the meeting, and there are more unexpected guests on their way. For unbeknownst to the Hooded Skull, Harlequin 9 slipped a tracking device onto one of the bottles during the fight at the Cogswell mansion. He will show up at the club with a bunch of Baron Cogswell's bodyguards and attempt to seize the bottles. A three or four-cornered battle may ensue, with lots of rich, important hostages and unbelievably expensive property damage. Not to mention the risk of breaking one of the bottles.

Any arrests the PCs make won't stick. They were here illegally, with no warrants, so the arrests were illegal. Harlequin 9, on the other hand, has an invitation (Prescott Cogswell is a member of the same club).

Have the threat of being sued hang over the PCs for a little while, and then vanish. The software tycoon had enormous fun and he uses his wealth and influence to get the PCs out of any hot water they may be in. He even pays for the damage to the club.

A little while later, Prescott Cogswell holds a party in an attempt to get back in the good graces of Society. He serves what he claims is his incredibly expensive and rare Chateaux LaTour '45. Yet every one of his guests can tell at once that this mediocre stuff is nothing of the kind. His disgrace is now complete.

The Hooded Skull, on the other hand, does quite well out of the adventure. The buyer liked seeing Wargtimmen in action so much that he contracts them out

for further skullduggery, and God's Lightning is very pleased.

The Buyer's Bodyguards

PL: 3

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 2
Attack Bonus: 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 3 Impervious (2 without Body Armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 3 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Intimidate 5 (+5), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 5 (+7), Search 5 (+7)

Feats: Assessment, Chokehold, Precise Shot, Quick Draw

Equipment: Body Armor (3 pts Impervious Protection), Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

Background: The Buyer hires goons from a security consultation firm called "Iron Fist Consultations." They tend to be ex-military guys with shaved heads, sunglasses and goatees. As it happens, Iron Fist Consultations is the arch-rival of the Sturmwell Group, from which Baron Cogswell rents his own security. As soon as the two groups see each other they will begin to exchange taunts and threats.

forces or army rangers. They get hired to guard secret air-force bases and nuclear power plants when they aren't protecting the homes of the very rich. While they look exactly the same as the guys from Iron Fist Consultations, they regard them as upstart rivals and will at once begin to insult them.

Baron Cogswell's Security Staff

PL: 4

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2)
Con: 16 (+3) **Int:** 10 (+0)
Wis: 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 5
Attack Bonus: 4 **Defense:** 4 **Toughness Save:** 3
Fortitude Save: 4
Reflexes Save: 4
Willpower Save: 3

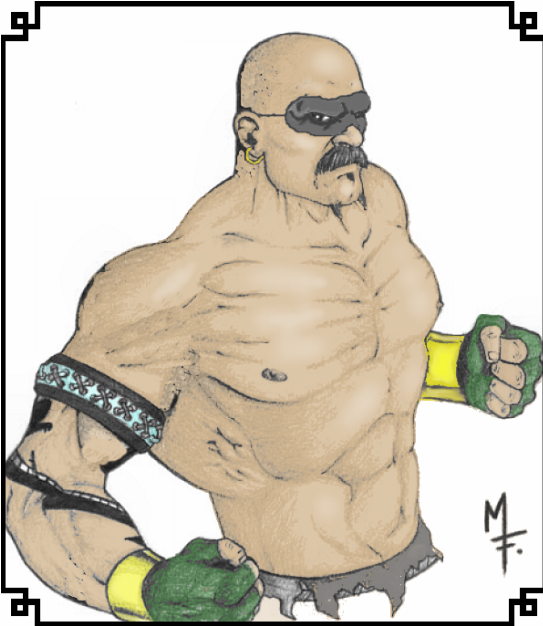
Skills: Intimidate 5 (+5), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+6), Search 3 (+5), Sense Motive 6 (+8)

Feats: Assessment, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Precise Shot, Quick Draw

Equipment: Heavy Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage)

Background: A slightly more elite class of thugs, these gentlemen are all ex-special-

THE WHITE SPECTER



"Stop whining. It's just a broken arm."

Real Name: Diego de la Vega

PL: 12

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 20 (+5) **Con:** 18 (+4)

Int: 13 (+1) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 18 (+4)

Initiative: 13 **Attack Bonus:** 16

Defense: 14 (10 if unable to Dodge)

Toughness Save: 10 (4 if unable to dodge) **Fortitude Save:** 12

Reflexes Save: 14 **Willpower Save:** 12

Skills: Climb 16 (+20), Concentration 8 (+12), Intimidate 12 (+16), Languages (Amaru, Spanish, Inca), Notice 6 (+10), Stealth 7 (+12), Survival 16 (+20)

Feats: Accurate Attack, All-Out Attack, Benefit (Effectively the leader of an international terror network), Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 6, Dodge Focus 4, Endurance, Improved Critical (Bullwhip), Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative 2, Improved Pin, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Inspire, Instant Up, Leadership, Power Attack, Sidekick (3 PL 9 students, see their stats on Page 150), Takedown Attack 2, Tracking, Uncanny Dodge (Auditory, Visual)

Powers: Super Senses (Danger-Sense) 2, Device (Bullwhip [Melee Weapon, 3 Damage; Extras: Mighty, can strike

opponents up to ten feet away, can be used to make Trip and Disarm attacks])

Complications: Rigid, stiff, incapable of coping with new situations, makes bad strategic decisions constantly, -6 to any Intelligence-related roll that forces him to deal with anything outside his previous experience.

Background: Legendary phantom of the heights, the Specter has stalked the Andes for more than a hundred years. People say that he is ageless, that he knows incredible secrets passed down from the Incas and dwells in a lost temple somewhere above the clouds. Evil never sleeps well while the White Specter walks, so they say.

The reality is more prosaic. Diego de la Vega is the latest in a long line of men to assume the name and mask of the White Specter. He lives a simple, Spartan life, staying out of doors all year long, wandering through the mountains, seldom making camp in the same place twice.

Like his predecessors, he claims to protect the highlands from communists and evildoers, but the truth has always been more complex. He also protects the highlands from anyone who tries to improve the lot of the Indians in any way whatever. Wanting to help the poor is the same thing as Communism, as far as he is concerned. Both would upset the social order of landholders and peasants, as ordained by God, and both are punishable by death.

He feels that Spanish people are racially superior to Indians, women belong in the kitchen and the Army should run the country. He has killed quite a few people who disagree.

Yet he does also keep ordinary people safe from bandits, thieves and Maoist insurgents. He turns a blind eye to the cocaine trade, convinced that the great landowning families would never stoop to involving themselves in anything so low. And if they ever did, he supposes they must have had their reasons.

While he has never been White Thunder's official leader, he leads their violent wing and that makes him the de-facto head of the whole group. Yet he has little involvement with their day-to day

affairs, preferring to patrol the mountains and set general policy. Every once in a while some high-ranking member of the group will make their way up into the deepest part of the mountains, find wherever the White Specter has made camp and ask for his advice about one or another situation. His advice is always followed.

The current White Specter is about forty-five and he's actively looking for a successor. He recruits promising young people from eminent families within White Thunder, brings them up into the mountains and trains them in all the deadly arts he knows.

He is a demanding teacher. He's also wildly irresponsible and doesn't much care whether his students live or die. He'll send them to make impossible climbs without proper gear, or to cross a snowfield full of crevasses blindfolded or set them all kinds of other tasks that will cause their deaths. Whenever another one perishes, he announces that they must not have had enough spirit—but of course that's absurd. The most competent mountaineer in the world will die if you leave them exposed for a night without proper gear in a snowstorm. How much spirit they have is irrelevant. All the will in the world won't keep you alive at twenty below without a coat. Many perfectly capable students get killed through sheer random chance.

More than half of them survive; although more through blind luck than by actually being the best. The survivors tend to become fanatically loyal to the man, who for all his failings has an undeniably magnetic personality. He usually has two or three of them around him, forming his innermost cadre of elite killers—his personal cult. None of them have yet managed to satisfy him enough to become his heir.

People who meet the White Specter tend to come away impressed by the wise, stern, impassive aura he projects. Spend more time with him and you'll begin to discover his weaknesses. He is incredibly rigid and not very bright, all but incapable of dealing with unfamiliar situations. He can't comprehend that the Cold War is over or that the Soviet bloc is dead. He can't understand that the world might contain

anything but absolutely good and absolutely bad people. He mistrusts books and the people who read them. Humorless, slow to adapt and secretly rather cruel, he makes a lot of poor strategic decisions. He also takes himself much too seriously, and demands to be treated with reverence. Anyone who fails to show him the proper deference and respect puts themselves in grave danger.

As unpleasant as the White Specter can be, he is an honorable opponent, who would never dream of striking from ambush or hitting a man while he is down. Nor would he attack an innocent, kill a woman or stoop to torture a captured foe. Alas, his code of honor doesn't apply to Indians, whom he doesn't see as real human beings.

Adventures With the White Specter: 1) The School of Hard Knocks and Cold Death

The crazy, headstrong, willful grandson of a retired superhero has run away to South America and disappeared. His grandfather knows the Player Characters and asks them for help.

Use a WW II epoch hero, an all-American, star-spangled crusader who still believes in the promise of the Roosevelt years. If you don't have anyone appropriate in your campaign, call him Liberty Boy. He's long since retired and in no condition to go on adventures by himself. Liberty Boy is afraid that his grandson has gone off to fight the shadowy secret society called "White Thunder" which is said to haunt the Andes. The old man fought them back in the early sixties, but it always ended in stalemate. They were too deeply entrenched, and their leader, the fiend they called the "White Specter," always retreated deep into the mountains whenever he was pressed too hard. Liberty Boy still regards it as one of his great personal failings. He helped bring liberty and democracy to Europe, but he couldn't do it right here in the Americas.

For reasons that he doesn't understand, his grandson has always hated him, always resented his optimism and his clean-cut image. Yet he fiercely defended Liberty Boy's reputation against anyone

from outside the family who criticized it—in fact he was always getting into fights at school with kids who badmouthed his grandpa. He's a wild, wayward kid with a chip on his shoulder who doesn't know what he wants out of life. Has he gone off to fight the one foe his grandpa could never beat? Have they killed him? It preys on the old man. He has to know.

In fact that's not what happened at all. Unbeknownst to Liberty Boy, his grandson has recently been going through a Nazi phase, and he's run off to see if he can join White Thunder himself.

The White Specter is shocked and indignant that a gringo would seek to join his ranks. Despite the way he values blonde hair, blue eyes and "Saxon" blood as a sign of purity, he regards actual gringos as racially inferior. Yet the fact that this is Liberty Boy's grandson makes it a hard opportunity to resist. The current White Specter never met Liberty Boy, but he heard his predecessor tell all kinds of awful, humiliating stories about the man and the disrespect he showed to White Thunder.

He's putting the boy through a series of tests that will surely kill him. Once the kid dies, the White Specter can declare that he perished because his blood was weak and his lineage impure. This is the worst shame he could ever imagine inflicting on Liberty Boy, and the sweetest revenge.

The boy is very strong but he won't last forever. Can the PCs and the aging Liberty Boy come to his rescue in time? Will he even want to be rescued?

2) Performance Review

Jack Briggs calls the PCs. He's in bad trouble, and he's willing to make a deal. Jack's irresponsible behavior has drawn the attention of the White Specter, who wants Jack to come up into the mountains and meet with him in person to discuss his recent job performance. This seems to Jack like the kind of meeting he might not come back from and he's scared enough to try something desperate.

Here's what he proposes. If the PCs will trail him to South America (he'll call them periodically to keep them on his track), break in on the meeting before

anybody has a chance to kill him, capture both Jack and the White Specter and take them both into custody, Jack will tell the PCs everything he knows about White Thunder. As an added bonus, he'll betray Bitchley Bitch-Bastard to them as well.

It seems to Jack that once the PCs capture him he'll be safe from White Thunder's wrath in some Ultramax Security prison for a few years. And with the White Specter out of the picture, the whole organization is sure to go into upheaval as various families struggle to seize control. If the PCs (armed with Jack's insider information) are vigorously trying to stamp them out at the same time, they're sure to have bigger things to worry about than punishing Jack for his ineptitude. By the time he gets out of prison, the organization may have ceased to exist altogether.

Once the PCs follow God's Lightning to the Andes, they start getting attacked by White Thunder death squads. Jack always calls them up a few minutes ahead of time to warn them when this is going to happen.

Jack isn't quite sure how to find the White Specter. He was told to go to a particular place, deep in the mountains, and wait for further instructions. In fact, while Jack doesn't know this, the White Specter plans to meet him there in person.

After they get into the back country, the PCs suffer another attack from a White Thunder hit-team. This time Jack doesn't warn them in advance. He calls the PCs up afterwards, and apologetically explains to them that the situation has changed. He has met the White Specter and the old boy wasn't planning on killing him after all. He attributes Jack's failures to improper training, and he wants him to come train up in the mountains for a few months, under the Specter's personal tutelage. The deal is off. He thought that after they'd been to all this trouble he might at least warn them. Not that it matters either way, he supposes. They'll never leave these mountains alive.

Now the White Specter, his inner cadre of expert young killers, and God's Lightning are all hunting the PCs across the highlands. This is White Thunder's home turf. They know the ground and the PCs do not. Things look grim for our heroes. But

once God's Lightning finds out what training under the White Specter is like, he may just switch sides again.

White Thunder: Inner Cadre

PL: 9

Str: 15 (+2) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 13 (+1) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 7 **Attack Bonus:** 11
Defense: 9 (3 if caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 6 (3 if caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 7 **Reflexes Save:** 9 **Willpower Save:** 6

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Climb 9 (+11), Disable Device 4 (+7), Gather Information 5 (+8), Intimidate 7 (+10), Notice 10 (+11), Profession (rural landowner) 3 (+5), Ride 8 (+11), Search 6 (+7), Sense Motive 3 (+4), Stealth 8 (+11), Survival 12 (+13)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Connected, Defensive Roll 6, Dodge Focus 6, Endurance, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Critical (with hunting rifle), Precise Shot, Second Chance (Willpower Saves), Taunt, Tracking

Equipment: Hunting Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage), Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Night-Binoculars (Effect: Darkvision and Extended Vision), Survival Gear

Complications: Fanatically loyal to the White Specter, ready to die, kill, or commit any atrocity at his word.

Background: These vicious young fanatics are the White Specter's personal students and bodyguards. They worship him with all the slavish, hysterical adoration of a cult. From time to time one dies or gets sent back down the mountain to take up a leadership position in White Thunder, but there are always two or three of them on hand. They are much alike in personality—spoiled, angry young men with limited horizons who adore their master and kill people for sport.

Most were abused as children and want the father-figure in their lives to hurt them and make impossible demands of them. They have found the right man for the job.

Eager to prove how hard and dangerous they are, desperate to win their

beloved Master's favor, they constantly compete with one another to see who can do the most outrageous thing in the White Specter's name. This actually makes them more prone to acts of ruthless savagery than the man himself. He is willing to use this, and let them do the dishonorable, distasteful things that his personal code prohibits him from doing himself.

Despite his conservatism and his general distrust of women, the White Specter has occasionally let girls join the ranks of his students. They have to try even harder than the boys to prove themselves to him, of course, and the odds are even higher that he will set them a fatal "test," but if he is impressed enough by their fighting spirit, he will let them on the team. The few women who have joined him are if anything even more dangerous than the men, since they have to constantly try harder at everything.

Ironically, the White Specter's failure to find a successor has actually made his position within White Thunder stronger. Every former student he sends back down becomes another highly-placed loyalist in the organization's upper ranks. He has so little strategic sense that this fact has never occurred to him.

TEAM ELUGAL

Membership: Mordak (Axe-wielding king of the Babylonian gods), Ishtar (goddess of love and war, and also Mordak's beloved wife), Baal (lord of lies, master of illusion, terminally depressed), Ashur (god of war and strength), Eshrikigel (crazed goddess of destruction, who doesn't really belong in the Babylonian mythos—but then again neither does Baal).

Background: Once they were Iraq's national superhero team. Now it's unclear who or what they're fighting for.

Everything about Team Elugal is shrouded in mystery. We don't know their origin, their personal identities or the true nature of their relationship to the Hussein regime. All five of them appeared at once, in the aftermath of the first Gulf War. They claimed to be the Babylonian gods, returned from millennia of oblivion to protect their ancient homeland. Yet there are troubling indications that they may in fact be something much worse. They were the apple of President Hussein's eye, his favorite and most trusted henchmen. Some people think they were more than this, and that in fact they ran the country after some time in 1994, with Saddam Hussein as their terrified pawn. Other experts disagree. Whatever the truth is, they weren't at President Hussein's side when his country finally fell to the Americans, nor did they help him escape capture.

Here is what we do know for certain. As the first Gulf War ground to a close, the retreating Iraqi army set fire to Kuwait's oil wells, causing one of the biggest conflagrations in history. Kuwait has richer oil reserves than any nation on earth. Setting the fields ablaze created conditions never seen before. The sky turned black, the air turned unbreathable, the ground became a morass of toxic sludge that stretched for dozens of miles in all directions. A huge international effort mobilized to clean up the mess and extinguish the burning wells. All of the

world's wellfire control companies, from Sweden to Texas to Djakarta, were there on the scene.

One of the smaller outfits, a Texas-based company called "Boots and Coots Inc." employed a superhero called Prairie Wind to help blow out fires on site. He was hugely successful, until his sudden and horrible death. While on assignment in one of the worst, most contaminated areas, Prairie Wind reported that he could see someone rising up out of the sludge. Then he started screaming. Two other groups in the area (the Swedish government's military team and the Kuwaiti air force) both had superheroes in the field as well, and they mobilized a rescue as quickly as they could. The hastily assembled team arrived to find Prairie Wind dead, and six previously unknown superhumans standing over his hideously disfigured corpse. One of them (the one we now call Mordak) was making some kind of speech in a language no one understood.

The ensuing battle was brutal. One of the Elugal (whose name we don't know—the others never speak of him) and three of the international team lay dead in the contaminated muck by the time it ended in stalemate. Not long thereafter Team Elugal made its first public appearance with Saddam Hussein, who announced that Iraq now had a counter to the super-teams of the West. The gods of Babylon had returned to protect Iraq. Let America beware!

This message went over better than you might think in a Muslim country. Iraq was a secular society, a socialist country where modern girls didn't cover their hair (at least in the cities) and nightclubs served alcohol. Anyway everyone was much too afraid of the secret police to dare call it blasphemy. President Hussein himself always identified more with the kings of ancient Mesopotamia than he did with Islam (and more with Stalin than either) and seemed untroubled by the religious overtones. Anything which gave him more power seemed like a good idea to him.

With his country broken and his army defeated, Saddam Hussein needed every achievement he could get to shore up

his image, so he gave Team Elugal a lot of press coverage. He built them a giant replica of the ancient palace at Nineveh, to use as their headquarters, he assigned a unit of elite Republican Guardsmen to wait on them hand and foot, he trotted them out for endless public appearances by his side. He didn't seem afraid of them, which might make him the only human being alive who wasn't.

Over the next few years, Team Elugal fought Shiite insurgents in the south, Kurdish insurgents in the north and twice tangled with British and American superheroes sent to enforce the no-fly zone over Iraq. They even foiled a bank robbery in downtown Karballah. The team did not fight in the invasion of Iraq and they vanished for more than eight months thereafter. When they re-emerged, they began attacking American and other coalition forces all across the country, wreaking bloody havoc from one end of Iraq to the other. None of them have been captured to date.

Unbeknownst to the American authorities, the team is currently in an awkward position. The Iraqi insurgency has a lot of Wahabi Muslim fanatics in its ranks and they don't like Ishtar and Eshrikigel's costumes at all. But their immodest dress is only a minor blasphemy compared to the way the whole team claims to be reincarnated pagan gods. There are no gods but Allah, and anyone who says different should be killed as unpleasantly as possible, according to their way of thinking.

Of course it's impossible to explain to Ishtar that she should put some more clothes on, let alone Eshrikigel. Mortals don't have the right to tell their deities how to dress. Nor can Team Elugal be persuaded to shut up about their divinity. Or to refrain from murdering anyone who questions it. This has made it hard for them to cooperate with much of the insurgency. There are still plenty of Baath Party socialists who don't care a fig about radical Islam who are willing to work with Team Elugal, but their ranks are growing thinner (and the fact that the team is so difficult and dangerous to work with doesn't help matters much). Although the Americans

haven't figured it out yet, for the most part Team Elugal operates by themselves, these days.

The American forces have been waiting for years for Team Elugal to try to rescue Saddam Hussein, but they have never tried. No one knows why. The Pentagon also dreads the day that Team Elugal arrives on America's shores and brings the war home. But somehow this hasn't happened either.

While it's still unclear exactly who and what the members of Team Elugal are, over the past ten years Western observers have been able to establish that their powers are indeed supernatural in origin, but that whoever put the team together had a pretty weak understanding of Babylonian mythology. The axe-wielding king of the Babylonian gods is Marduk, not "Mordak." Baal is a figure from Phoenician mythology, not one of the gods of Babylon. Nor does Eshrikigel belong in this group of deities. Whoever Team Elugal are, they're not the Babylonian gods. Yet their powers are only too real. No one understands what this could mean.

Threat Level: This is a supervillain menace of the first rank, mostly because of how powerful its individual members are. Yet Team Elugal is weak on teamwork. In particular, they don't have a good idea of how to coordinate their powers effectively on the battlefield. They function more like a superhuman commando unit than a traditional villain team, but their tactics aren't very well adapted to match their superhuman abilities—it's as if Mordak read a book on commando tactics but didn't completely understand it (which is in fact exactly what happened). Still, they always have a backup plan, and always have at least two escape routes. They are unbelievably ruthless in combat, perfectly willing to take innocent life if it serves the plan (or if someone annoys them). These people strike to kill.

Base of Operations: This is one of the mysteries that has the experts baffled. Team Elugal's palace was overrun by the invading American troops without any

resistance. No one was inside. Looking through Team Elugal's papers, it became clear to US military intelligence that the team had four more bases, buried underground at various locations around Iraq. Yet all four bases were uncovered and taken without a fight. All four were unoccupied, and seemed to have seen little use.

The truth (carefully guarded by the GM) is that they stay in the homes of prominent Baathists (usually while their hosts are away, since it can be fatal to hang around the house with Team Elugal) or at the homes of their former bodyguards. They also have a rolling mobile transport, about the size of big armored RV, which they sometimes travel around in. Baal's powers of illusion keep anyone from noticing it.

Organization: Mordak is the leader. Unlike his namesake, he isn't particularly wise and isn't an especially good tactician. Nor does he know how to motivate his underlings with anything but threats and screechy rants about his glory. The others follow his lead because they are somehow compelled to, not because they regard him with affection or respect.

Mordak claims that Ishtar is his sister and his wife, that Ashur is his younger brother, that Baal is his uncle and that Eshrikigel is his daughter. If these really were the Babylonian gods then none of this would be true—that's not the way the relationships line up at all.

Despite the tensions within the group (Ashur resents not being able to go out and rampage, Baal hates having to be a supervillain, Ishtar secretly loves Mordak and tries to get his attention, Eshrikigel is dangerously insane) everyone obeys Mordak immediately and without question. They have to, somehow.

Tactics: From every encounter western superheroes have had with Team Elugal, it's clear that they are hideously powerful and have no qualms at all about taking human life. They will gladly shoot through a crowd of civilians or blow up a hospital to get at someone inside. They are also

disorganized, and seem to believe their own propaganda.

Yet despite how brutal and inept Mordak is as a leader, he's weirdly conscientious about certain things—not because he has any lingering trace of human feeling, but because of his colossal arrogance. He won't let any member of his team take hostages or wreak havoc on random bystanders for no reason—that would be undignified, unworthy of a god. Nor will he let them do things that seem cowardly. They know to retreat when they have to, but he won't have them flee one moment before.

Using Team Elugal in Your Campaign:

Your player characters can go fight Team Elugal in Iraq, defending oil pipelines and embattled coalition troops, or face them on some covert mission in some other part of the world, or even try to stop them from destroying some major American monument. While they are intended primarily as opponents for campaigns set at least partly in the Middle East, one of the scariest things about Team Elugal is that they don't have to stay bottled up there forever.

If you want to set an adventure in the blood and dust of Iraq, we recommend making it gritty and real. That would usually mean there wouldn't be a lot of grand soliloquies and showy uses of powers, so we've specifically designed Team Elugal so that they have an excuse to carry on like megalomaniacal supervillains despite the realistic setting. We've made them pagan instead of Islamic, so that you won't have to keep track of all the restrictions and codes that devout Muslims operate under (and so the girls can wear skimpy costumes!) Their origins are vague so that you can fit it into your campaign more easily. However, if you'd like an origin story, here's a ready-made one. In fact, here are three of them. Pick whichever one works the best for your game.

THE SECRET ORIGIN OF TEAM ELUGAL VERSION ONE

Saddam Hussein was always looking for more power, and any mystic can tell you that Mesopotamia is the right place to do it. This land is so old it makes China look young. Here empires and schools of wizardry have risen and fallen for six thousand years and more. Terrible relics of ancient power lie buried under the sand. Texts and tomes and seal and sigils, Djinn and demons and things that have no name. Although President Hussein was no sorcerer himself, he gathered quite a bit of terrible occult lore over the years. Most of it was too awful to ever use, until the moment when he first faced defeat.

At the end of the first Gulf War Saddam Hussein was desperate. He was fairly confident the Americans wouldn't invade, but by beating his army in the field they would surely destabilize the country and embolden his enemies inside Iraq. And he had legions of enemies. Kurd militias in the north and religious fanatics in the south and generals he couldn't trust in his own council chambers. He had six of his best experts on the occult taken out to the Kuwaiti oilfields to perform a terrible black ritual of earth-murder. Then he had his troops set the oilfields ablaze, committing the necessary defilement of the earth for the magic to take effect. It worked better than he could have imagined, as no one had ever defiled the world so horribly before. The earth screamed where its blood was set ablaze and dark forces rose from the poison muck to embrace the six who invoked them, to enter their bodies and live again. For days they lay in the ground, taking form. Then Prairie Wind stumbled across them, just as they were waking up.

The five surviving Elugal had a deep mental bond with President Hussein, even as he languished in prison. They took the form he wanted them to, based on his own weak and muddled understanding of the Babylonian pantheon. The entities themselves are formless, more powers than

thinking beings, without real identities of their own. Now that they are locked in the bodies of mortal men and women they believe the delusional fictions that Saddam thought up for them, even though they don't make any sense. He was the only human being they felt any affection towards or affinity with. After the invasion they stood by his side. Then both of his sons died and he went into a terrible, self-destructive depression and drove Team Elugal away from him.

They never attempted to rescue him because they were sure the Americans would kill him rather than risk letting him go. When he was at last condemned to death, the execution was carried out so quickly that it took the team by surprise and they didn't have time to stop it.

When Saddam died, they should have been released from their present form to slip back into the shadowy toxic nothingness from which they came, leaving five very puzzled Iraqi occultists standing powerless in the dust. Yet they did not. His cruel dream was a strong one, and it seems to have outlived him.

THE SECRET ORIGIN OF TEAM ELUGAL VERSION TWO

In retrospect it may have been a mistake to put Saddam Hussein's violent, unpredictable son Oudai in charge of Iraq's super-soldier program. He killed scientists and test subjects alike when they failed him, which was nearly always.

They tried and failed to acquire battlesuits from the former Soviet Union, psi-enhancing drugs from the Chinese and secret tricks of genetic engineering from a cabal of ancient ex-Nazis. Oudai was seriously beginning to worry when the right consultant finally got in touch.

Idi Amin Dada, one of the few modern tyrants universally thought of as significantly worse than Saddam Hussein, was whiling away his old age in Saudi Arabia, safely beyond the reach of international law. He was close to

exhausting his personal fortune and he was bored, so he decided to make a little money and have a little fun as a consultant. Someone told him the Iraqis were looking for a cost-effective low-tech way to make supermen. That was good news, for he had perfected an excellent low-cost superhuman enhancement technique in his jungle death-labs long ago. If his Saudi hosts had known that he was dealing with their enemies in Iraq he would have been in real jeopardy, so he had to move carefully. In Paris, Idi had several long conversations with Oudai Hussein and put him in touch with his surviving scientists. Then he cashed his enormous check.

The technique works, but it has a high human cost. First, you capture a superhuman. Then you take some volunteers, or some people you don't like, and inject them with the superhuman's body fluids. You can also transplant their stem cells, which is more effective but more expensive. A lot of test subjects will die and the ones who don't will go insane, but if you immerse the crazy ones in a sensory deprivation tank just as their madness is forming, and then talk to them through speakers for a few days, you can sometimes guide their delusional pattern into as they emerge, shaping them however you like.

As it happened there were plenty of people Oudai felt like subjecting to the process and six of them survived. Ironically, the secret facility where they were created and trained was mistaken for a biological weapons lab, which may have indirectly caused the invasion of Iraq, years later.

The six members of "Team Elugal" were brainwashed with a crude mixture of Babylonian mythology and nationalist politics, but they weren't combat-ready by the time the Gulf War began. When it became clear that Iraq was going to lose, and badly, Oudai's father demanded that he deploy them anyway. For the next ten years they served the regime more or less loyally. Once UN inspectors turned up on Iraqi soil it became for too dangerous to try to make any more superhumans (and in any case the program had been far too costly) so they mothballed the facility and burnt the evidence. No one wanted more supermen

like Team Elugal anyway. Scary, violent and unpredictable, only Oudai himself and members of his immediate family were safe around them. Some people think that Oudai used Team Elugal to secretly take over the reigns of power from his father, but this isn't true. He was due to inherit everything in any case and felt no need to rush things. Once Oudai Hussein was killed by the Delta Force, the team felt little loyalty to anyone but themselves. They never tried to rescue Saddam Hussein because they didn't care what happens to him.

THE SECRET ORIGIN OF TEAM ELUGAL VERSION THREE

No one knows where the Texas superhero known as Prairie Wind came from. He appeared one day in Houston and saved the city from a mysterious storm. After that he was always cagey about his origins and shunned the limelight as much as he could. In fact he was one of the Thog—a brutal race of extradimensional conquerors who have long regarded the Earth with envious eyes. Yet Earth frightens the Thog as much as it attracts them. For Earth has a wealth of powerful superhuman protectors nearly equal to the Thog's own. They have conquered four hundred dimensions and annihilated a thousand and five, but the Earth gives them pause.

Prairie Wind (or to use his real name: "A'b Aargo 118") was a renegade, infected with blasphemous ideas like compassion and empathy, who fled to this most dangerous of worlds, giving up most of his power and hiding his memories, to make himself harder to trace. He hid well. It took ten years for the Thog to find him and another five to decide what to do about it. They didn't want to send a team of paranormals to grab him in public—that would get the earthlings curious, set their scientists and mystics looking for the Thog. Yet it would have been all but impossible to seize him without a battle so huge that it would draw enormous amounts of attention. Then Prairie Wind went to help clean up the

burning Kuwaiti oil wells, and the Thog suddenly had an opportunity to catch him. They hastily assembled a plan.

Six of the Thog's own parahumans had their memories and appearances edited so that they appeared to be the old gods of Babylon (the Thog didn't understand Babylonian mythology very well, and they were throwing the whole thing together kind of hurriedly, so they made a lot of mistakes). This would throw any superheroes or villains investigating them onto the wrong track. In case any of them were captured or killed, they had an extra layer of security. The Thog quietly captured six ordinary Iraqis and programmed Team Elugal with faint traces of their memories, just to throw investigators who were skeptical of their claims to divinity even further off track. Because Iraq was such an isolated nation, full of evil secrets, most superheroes would assume "Team Elugal" was some awful creation of Saddam Hussein's. No one would even start thinking about the possibility of extradimensional invaders.

Unfortunately, the plan worked a little too well. Team Elugal's leader, Anu, died in the battle in the oilfields and the others had to flee deep into Iraq, far away from the interdimensional gateway they had arrived through. Anu was the only one who knew the code-words required to make their real identities reassert themselves.

The surviving members of Team Elugal made their way to Baghdad, where they were welcomed by a puzzled but delighted Saddam Hussein. News of their having killed four coalition superheroes had already reached him and he was half inclined to believe their story about the old gods having returned to save Mesopotamia. Over the next few years he came to fear them more than he had anyone in his life. It would be a mistake to say that Team Elugal was really running the country after the mid 90s, but that's only because they had no interest in doing the hard work of actually running things. Instead, the duty of somehow holding things together while giving Team Elugal whatever crazy thing they might demand fell on Saddam Hussein's weary shoulders. It was almost a

relief when America invaded. It gave him the perfect excuse to flee his superhuman "protectors." If he looked untroubled when he was finally captured, and went to his grave with a smile on his face, it's because he was actually glad that it was the Americans who had caught him and not Team Elugal. They never attempted to rescue him from his captivity, much to his relief.

Meanwhile, the Thog still lurk and scheme. They are frankly at a loss as to how to bring Team Elugal home. If it would be difficult to recapture one rogue parahuman without drawing undue attention to themselves, how much harder would it be with five of them? But for now they are prepared to wait. An opportunity will no doubt present itself eventually.

Adventures With Team Elugal: 1) An Olive Branch and a Blazing Sword

A rogue faction of the Shiite militia called "the Madhi Army" has holed up in one of the most sacred sites in the holy city of Najaf, down in the southern part of Iraq. They have occupied the shrine and are refusing to leave. No one knows what their demands are, yet. In fact they may not yet have thought of anything. This is a delicate situation. The Shiites are officially allies of the provisional government and the coalition of occupiers, but the radical young fundamentalists of the Madhi's Army want the Americans out of Iraq now and are prepared to shed blood to make this happen. A few years ago they took over some of the holy sites in the south until the Americans drove them out with a combination of guns and negotiations. These days the Madhi army has a kind of uneasy truce with the Americans and the new Iraqi government, but there are radicals within their ranks who want war with the occupying forces.

The splinter cell that has taken over the shrine in Najaf is led by a parahuman who calls himself the Blazing Sword of the Prophet. He fought Saddam Hussein for years and now he's fighting America with equal zeal.

The Americans and the new Iraqi

government have been trying to talk the Blazing Sword into leaving the shrine with his followers, so as not to risk damaging the site with a full frontal assault—this is one of the holiest places in Shia Islam, and if it gets destroyed the whole southern part of the country will be up in arms. The Madhi Army doesn't really want a large-scale confrontation with the occupation forces yet, and they too have been trying to talk the Blazing Sword into vacating the shrine with no success.

Suddenly there is unexpected progress. The Blazing Sword says he'll surrender, but he wants to talk about terms. A Shiite holy man who the Blazing Sword respects has offered to come negotiate the terms with him and the parahuman has accepted. To everyone's surprise, the Blazing Sword announces that he wants one of the PCs to attend the meeting, too. As it happens, he's a fan. An avid reader of comic books, he has always idolized this particular PC (use either a legacy hero or a wholesome, all-American defender of justice). The Blazing Sword of the Prophet wants them to negotiate on behalf of the Americans. No one else will do. The PC is the only American he trusts.

The State Department contacts the Player Characters and asks them to go to Iraq (if they're not there already). Their mission is to escort the Imam Al-Khushnam through the war-ravaged streets of Najaf to the shrine, and then to find out what the Blazing Sword wants and convey his terms to the occupation forces.

Unfortunately for everyone, there are people in the Baathist underground who want the Shiites to stay as divided against one another as possible, and they're going to send Team Elugal to kill the PCs, Imam Al-Khushnam and everyone else traveling in the motorcade.

Team Elugal will hit the motorcade out on the road, but will withdraw if they meet heavy resistance. They'll strike again in the narrow, confined streets of Najaf with lots of civilians around. If this fails they will withdraw again and strike while the PCs are negotiating with the Blazing Sword of the Prophet.

There are more complicating

factors. Team Elugal cares nothing for Islam or its sacred relics and they won't care if the shrine gets damaged. The PCs, on the other hand, have a vested interest in protecting it. If the shrine gets destroyed, the mission fails and southern Iraq falls into chaos. The Imam Al-Khushnam hates Americans and will refuse to cooperate with them—his sole purpose here is to make sure the shrine doesn't get hurt and that's the only thing he'll press for in the negotiations. When Team Elugal attacks the negotiations, the Blazing Sword's followers may think the PCs have betrayed them and turn this into a three-way battle.

The Blazing Sword himself is a wild card. The reason he took over the shrine was to highlight what he sees as corruption within the Madhi Army. He wants certain officials within the organization to be removed from their posts, but he's not sure how to ask for this. Angry, confused and volatile, he'll ask the PC whom he idolizes to tell him what he should do.

The Blazing Sword of the Prophet

PL: 10

Str: 14 (+2) Dex: 14 (+2) Con: 14 (+2) Int: 12 (+1) Wis: 16 (+3) Cha: 16 (+3) Initiative: 2 Attack Bonus: 8 Defense: 8 Toughness Save: 10 (2 without Force Field) Fortitude Save: 8 Reflexes Save: 7 Willpower Save: 8

Skills: Gather Information 4 (+7), Knowledge (Civics) 3 (+4), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 4 (+5), Notice 5 (+8), Performance (Oratory) 9 (+12), Survival 6 (+9)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Benefit (one of the leaders of and underground Shiite militia), Connected, Distract (Linked to Performance), Power Attack.

Powers: Flight 6 (Maximum Speed: 500 mph), Force Field 10, Immunity 5 (to Plasma Blasts), Plasma Control 12 (Power Feat: Alternate Power [Dazzle])

2) "Once Ohio's Second-Largest Ball of Twine Falls, America Will Follow!"

The moment we've all been dreading has finally arrived. Team Elugal decides to bring the war to America. It's easy enough for

them to get into the country. Baal uses his powers to simulate a Saudi diplomatic passport and gets swiftly hustled past airport security, no questions asked. The rest of the team just flies across the Atlantic under their own power, keeping below the altitude where radar can spot them.

Once they're here, things get considerably more difficult for the team. They have no contacts, no means of support. They rob a supermarket off a freeway in North Carolina to get some supplies and then they start looking for a headquarters. Finally they take up residence in a giant half-deserted facility where old tax forms and obsolete Dept. of Transportation vehicles are stored, a vast maze of tunnels and storage rooms that no one has checked up on in years. There are US Army sentries outside the gate, but they never enter the complex. There's more than enough room for the team to quietly hide in the sprawling tunnels and chambers. The guards at the gate have no idea that the complex has become infested with supervillains and will challenge anyone who tries to enter (Team Elugal has blasted its own way in).

Once the team has some food and a lair, they'll start looking for a way to bring America to its knees. They want to destroy the country by attacking its most cherished symbols, wrecking its will to fight. Of course this doesn't make sense. If the Statue of Liberty or the Washington Monument got destroyed, the US would just fight back harder. We didn't say it was a *good* plan.

However, Baal is the only member of the team who knows much of anything about America and he doesn't feel like helping his comrades. They know about New York City, they know that the capitol is called Washington, DC, they've vaguely heard that Hollywood is somewhere on the west coast and that's about it. They don't know where or what Chicago is, let alone Mount Rushmore. They do know about the Statue of Liberty, but that seems like too tough a target to start with—New York is crawling with superheroes and the whole American military would scramble to protect it. They might try it as a suicide run, but they want to wreck some other things first.

Where to begin?

There follows a muddled, hopeless campaign of attacks on whatever "Iconic" sites Team Elugal happens to hear about. They see an ad for a waterslide park that calls itself "*America's Favorite*" so they go attack it, thinking it's as important as the Empire State Building or the Lincoln Memorial. They'll go attack the world's second-largest ball of string in Ohio, or a giant used car lot that claims to be "*An American Legend*." The real challenge for the PCs will be to figure out where Team Elugal will strike next, since their choice of targets is so random and confused.

MORDAK



"I made the Earth and Sky. If you can say the same, then I might speak to you as an equal."

Real Name: Mordak

PL: 15

Str: 38 (+14) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 28 (+9)

Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 15

Defense: 12

Toughness Save: 15 (10 Impervious)

Fortitude Save: 9 **Reflexes Save:** 8

Willpower Save: 10 (15 vs. psychic attacks)

Skills: Intimidate 10 (+12), Notice 3 (+7), Perform (Oratory) 10 (+12), Search 3 (+7)

Feats: Diehard, Distract (Linked to Perform: Oratory), Fascinate (Linked to Perform: Oratory), Fearsome Presence 8, Improved Critical (With Axe), Improved Sunder,

Inspire, Power Attack, Takedown Attack

Powers: Device (Golden Axe, Easy to Lose, Melee Weapon, Damage 3 [Extra: Mighty], Ranged Weapon [Blast 15]), Flight 9 (Maximum Speed: 5,000 MPH), Immunity (to aging, cold, disease, fatigue, heat, poison, pressure, radiation, starvation, suffocation), Impervious Toughness 10, Mind-Shield 5, Protection 6, Sensory Shield 10, Super-Senses 2 (Darkvision) Super-Strength 8 (Maximum Lift: 800 Tons; Power Feat: Super-Breath)

Equipment: Comlink, Vehicle (Mobile Command Post; Size: Gargantuan; Strength: 45; Speed: 4; Defense: 6; Toughness: 12; Features and Powers: Alarm [DC 20 to disable], Comlink, Navigation System [+5 to all skill checks related to Navigation])

Complications: Deluded fanatic, genuinely believes that he is a god and feels compelled to act like one, unable to do anything that he thinks would be beneath his station.

Background: Mordak, king of the gods, he who forged the first and mightiest axe, he who slew the cosmic dragon Tiamat and made the universe from her body. Strangely fussy and prim for someone so dangerous and powerful, Mordak takes his role as a god very seriously and notices any petty slight to his status at once.

Everything must always be just precisely so. His living quarters must be arranged to suit his taste, his bathwater must be the correct temperature when the household staff draw it for him. Anyone who shows him any disrespect or violates his exacting standards of quality risks provoking a murderous rage. Because it's hard to suit him, and he grows weary of killing servants when they get things wrong, he carries a mountain of personal furniture and art around with him, and insists on supervising the decoration of any new living quarters he adopts. Living rough in the field is unbearable to him. He can't stand the sight of dirt on his uniform and it would be beneath him to clean it off himself.

Despite his fastidious nature, Mordak can't be persuaded to shave his thin, patchy, untidy looking beard. Suggesting this to him is likely to send him

into a lethal tantrum. Because his beard reminds everyone who sees it of the late Yassir Arafat, Mordak has come to associate the former head of the PLO with disrespectful comments about his appearance and mentioning Arafat's name within his earshot is dangerous.

Impatient with Islam and its dictates, Mordak is forever making enemies out of potential allies by ignoring or slandering the Muslim faith. Of course, the mere fact that he claims to be an ancient Babylonian deity is utterly blasphemous in and of itself. Still, even moderate Arabs are often put off by his grandstanding about his supposed divinity. He has noticed this problem, but thinks it would be beneath him to care.

Mordak also cares nothing whatever for the sanctity of human life (this too would be beneath him) but he isn't sadistic and doesn't go out of his way to cause pain, destruction and civilian casualties. Mordak thinks it would be vulgar to care about human beings enough to take pleasure in killing them. He would certainly torture a captured foe if he thought it would be useful to do so, but he's just as likely to decide that they couldn't possibly know anything of value to a god. This kind of thinking guides everything he does. While he's not an honorable opponent by any means, he would never do anything that he thinks is beneath his dignity. That actually includes taking hostages, lying, and breaking his word (although he would never give his word to a mere mortal, so this last restriction is unlikely to come up). He is however perfectly willing to hit opponents while they are down, strike people in the back, or set ambushes.

A loud, pompous combatant, Mordak constantly bellows about his own greatness and chastises those who would dare oppose him. Yet he's smart enough not to give away his battle plans or share his evil schemes with a fallen superhero. Mordak is far too self-absorbed to feel the need to confide his plans in anyone.

A hero with some psychological insight may notice that Mordak can't feel totally secure about his divinity, otherwise he wouldn't get so upset when someone

challenges it. They are correct. Inwardly, Mordak is plagued by doubts. Sometimes he remembers tiny, disconnected fragments of his former life, and while he can't make any sense of them, they clearly imply that he isn't a real god. He has never shared these thoughts with anyone, and denies them to himself.

Mordak is Team Elugal's unquestioned leader. Baal thinks he's an idiot, Ashur resents having to do what he says, but they both know he's the only one with the drive, energy and desire to lead the group. Anyway they're psychologically compelled to follow his orders. While Mordak says that Ishtar is his wife, he treats her with a kind of distant formality and never shows her any affection. She does not seem to resent this—in fact it seems to make her even more eager for his attention. They have never consummated their “marriage.”

Mordak is a competent strategist, but just barely. He clearly has some training in small unit tactics, but he clings to it much too rigidly, and can't adapt it to fit his teammates' superhuman powers. As a result, while Team Elugal always goes into battle with an operational plan, but it's seldom a very good one.

Adventures With Mordak

1) “What Would Mordak Do?”

Mordak develops an unhealthy fixation on a Player Character. Ideally this should be a character who is a deity from some other mythology—perhaps a Norse god or a Greek one. Mordak has the uneasy, half-conscious feeling that their existence is somehow a challenge to his own divinity. He decides to find out whether or not they are really a god. His methods are drastic. He confronts the PC on top of a bridge (either in Iraq, or the PC's home city if they aren't in a position to travel to Iraq on short notice). In one hand, Mordak holds a terrified young woman by the ankle, dangling her over the side. He demands to know if the PC is truly a god, worthy to speak to Mordak. Whatever they reply, he says: *“We shall see.”*

Mordak knocks a passing bus off the far side of the bridge, and then drops the

young woman. *"Which will you save?"* he asks. *"Which would a god save?"*

The GM should of course allow the PC to save both the falling woman and the passengers on the bus, although with some difficulty.

Mordak shakes his head and looks disapproving, *"The correct answer was 'neither',"* he says, as though ashamed of them. *"You are no god."* He averts his eyes, so as not to gaze upon the PC's shameful visage, and attacks.

If he beats them, he will let them live, as though they were too ignoble to bother killing. If he is driven off or defeated, he will not come back for revenge. Indeed, from that point on, whether he beats them or not, he will regard their existence as an embarrassing, distasteful matter and will ignore them if at all possible.

It is useless to explain to him that a god might desire to save mortals. He won't understand this idea, let alone agree with it.

2) When is a God Not a God?

Team Elugal assaults an oil pipeline terminus outside a small northern Iraqi city. We'll leave the exact location up to the GM—use whatever would work best for your campaign. The troops guarding the terminus are well entrenched and the assault swiftly becomes a siege. The PCs are sent in to stop Team Elugal with a tank column and a lot of air support at their backs.

With a little more time Team Elugal could probably root out the defenders, but time is now running short. Mordak decides that a fighting withdrawal is in order. Team Elugal retreats into the nearby town just as the PCs arrive at the scene. They engage the PCs in a running battle through the streets.

Suddenly, Mordak comes face to face with a terrified bystander, a woman named Dr. Khadija Haroun. Mordak knew Doctor Haroun in his previous life, back when he was an archeologist (if you are using back-story #3, then the Thog implanted Mordak with some memories from a dead Iraqi archeologist as an extra layer of security, and these are the memories that seeing Dr. Haroun triggers).

Memories come crashing into Mordak's head, memories that he finds intolerable. He screams and flies away. Without him, the team breaks and runs in confusion (perhaps giving the PCs a chance to take one or more of them down).

Dr. Haroun is a very young college professor—a modern woman who doesn't wear a headscarf and who talks a lot about improving the status of women across the Middle East. She speaks moderately good English, but she doesn't like or trust Americans at all. In fact she believes things about their reasons for occupying Iraq that may strike some PCs as downright paranoid. Let us hope that the PCs can find some way to get through to her anyway, since her life is now in terrible danger. Mordak looked very familiar to her, and yet she couldn't place him (in fact they were both members of the same university faculty, where the man who became Mordak harbored a secret crush on her).

The rest of Team Elugal wants to know who this woman is and what she did to Mordak. They think she used some kind of superhuman power or spell on him and they intend to force her to bring him back. Disorganized and leaderless without him, they struggle to pull themselves together enough to hunt down Dr. Haroun. They also suspect the PCs of being involved and they will harass and pursue them, too. Keeping Dr. Haroun alive for long enough to remember Mordak's secret identity may prove tricky.

Meanwhile, Mordak has flown off to an ancient burial mound outside Mosul. He knows this place should be very important to him, but he can't remember why (in fact it's either the place where he discovered the tablets with the forbidden ritual they used to create Team Elugal, if you're using that back-story, or the archeological dig where he first saw Khadija Haroun and became fell in love with her—or perhaps it's both).

He will sit on the mound and brood until his teammates or Khadija herself find him and coax him down. He won't be willing to hurt Dr Haroun, or to let anyone else hurt her, until he realizes that he has to choose between remembering his feelings for her and believing in his own divinity.

Then he will become absolutely determined to kill her himself.

Soldiers Guarding the Oil Terminal



PL: 5

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 5 **Defense:** 5
Toughness Save: 4 (1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 4

Skills: Climb 3 (+5), Intimidate 2 (+2), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+4), Medicine 2 (+3), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Soldier) 4 (+4), Stealth 2 (+3), Survival 3 (+4)

Feats: Accurate Attack

Equipment: Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire]), Binoculars (Extended Vision), Body Armor (4 Protection), Camouflage Clothing (+5 to Stealth Checks in the desert), may or may not have up to three Grenades (4 Damage, 15 foot burst radius, DC 15 to evade)

Complications: Subject to orders from superiors.

Vehicle: M1 Abrams Tank

Strength: 50

Speed: 4

Defense: 8

Toughness: 12 (6 Impervious)

Size: Huge

Weapons: Main Gun (Ranged Weapon, 10 damage, [Extra: Area, Burst Radius]), Anti-Personnel Machine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 6 damage, [Extra: Autofire])

Khadija Haroun

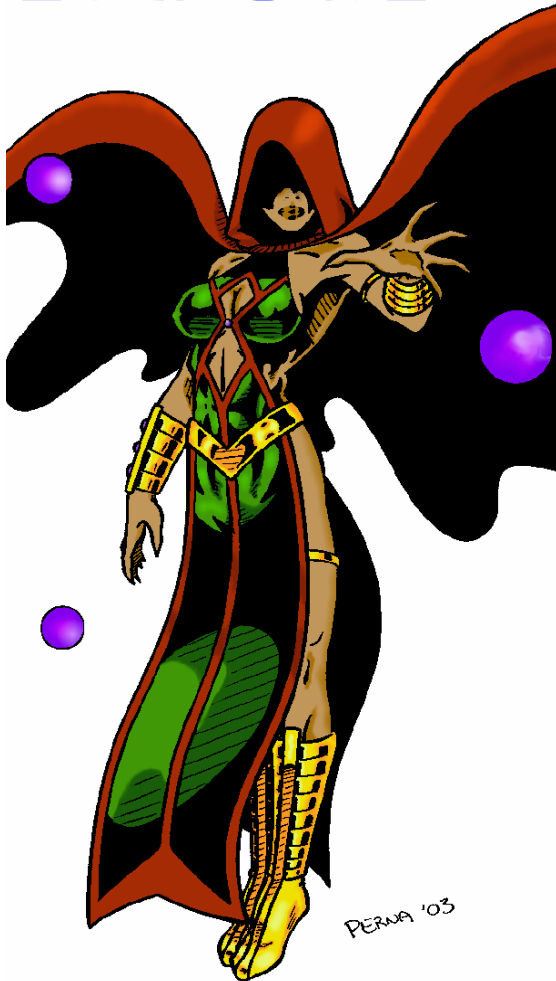
PL: 3

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 10 (+0)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 1 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 0 **Fortitude Save:** 0
Reflexes Save: 2 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Diplomacy 5 (+8), Knowledge (History) 7 (+10), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 5 (+8), Languages (English, Arabic, Parsi, Babylonian, Assyrian, Sumerian), Notice 5 (+7), Profession (Lecturer) 5 (+8)

Feats: Attractive, Skill Mastery (Diplomacy, Knowledge [History], Knowledge [Theology and Philosophy], Profession [Lecturer])

ishtar



"Love me, mortal, and despair! And bring unto me that thing which you name a 'diet soda', forthwith."

Real Name: Ishtar

PL: 12

Str: 36 (+8) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 38 (+9)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 26 (+8)
Initiative: +3 **Attack Bonus:** 12
Defense: 10 **Toughness Save:** 12 (10
 Impervious) **Fortitude Save:** 12
Reflexes Save: 12 **Willpower Save:** 6

Skills: Intimidate 6 (+14), Notice 3 (+4),
 Perform (Oratory) 10 (+18)

Feats: Attractive, Diehard, Distract (Linked
 to Perform: Oratory), Fascinate (Linked to
 Perform: Oratory), Fearsome Presence 5,
 Inspire, Power Attack.

Powers: Blast 14, Flight 9 (Maximum
 Speed: 5,000 MPH), Immunity (to aging,
 cold, disease, fatigue, heat, poison,
 pressure, radiation, starvation, suffocation),
 Impervious Toughness 10, Mind-Shield 5,
 Protection 3, Sensory Shield 10, Super-
 Senses 2 (Darkvision), Super-Strength 8
 (Maximum Lift: 800 Tons; Power Feat:
 Super-Breath)

Complications: Deluded zealot, genuinely
 believes that she is a goddess and feels
 compelled to act like one, is compelled to do
 whatever Mordak tells her to, even if it is
 severely contrary to her own wants (she
 would, for example, commit suicide if he
 asked her to).

Background: Ishtar, queen of love and
 war, mighty goddess of all things feminine
 and secret. She is the most fanatical
 member of Team Elugal, the one most
 convinced of her own divinity, and yet she
 may be the team's least dangerous, most
 approachable member.

Ishtar's personality bears little
 resemblance to the way she is described in
 the ancient Babylonian legends. In the
 myths, she is brash, passionate, loud and
 forthright, leering after attractive mortal
 heroes in a way that seems undignified and
 lewd to most modern readers. By contrast,
 the Ishtar on Team Elugal is quiet, reserved,
 mysterious and a little shy.

Unlike Mordak, she is absolutely
 certain that she is divine, and doesn't need
 to go around ranting about it all the time.
 While she believes that questioning her
 divinity is blasphemous and should be
 punished, she's too confident to actually feel
 threatened by it and doesn't fly into blind
 rages over it. Nor does she slaughter
 servants and minions over trivial mistakes
 like putting too much Sweet-n'-Low in the
 coffee or leaving the refrigerator open (it
 would be beneath her to notice anything so
 petty). You might almost be able to talk
 reasonably to Ishtar, without fear of her
 taking offense and going berserk. Yet at the
 same time, she is totally callous about
 human life, willing to kill anyone without a
 second thought. If she were to see a child
 drowning in the river, she would never
 deign to help them. Nor is she especially

honorable in combat. A goddess can do as she likes, and that includes hitting people from behind, striking non-combatants, betraying allies or deciding that she's bored and running away. Unlike Mordak, Ishtar does not have a problem with lying (except to her fellow gods) and feels no need to keep her word to mortals. What are mortals and their rules to her? Is she not Ishtar, supreme goddess? She has only one human weakness—she's desperately in love with Mordak, who ignores her, despite the fact that he is supposedly her husband. She would do a great deal to get his attention, although she's too passive and diffident to be able to think of anything.

In combat, Ishtar relies heavily on her three flying spheres (which are mentioned nowhere in any myths about Ishtar). She's the only member of the team who can do much damage at a distance without picking up something heavy and throwing it, so she's usually the one to lay down covering fire or duel with opposing energy projectors. No one seems to know what those spheres are. They seem at times to be solid but at other times to be made of a kind of glowing purple flame.

Ishtar's immodest costume makes Team Elugal unacceptable to most Islamic fundamentalists, and keeps them from winning any kind of broad acceptance within the Iraqi insurgency. If she would dress like a good Muslim girl and cover herself from head to toe, the team wouldn't have so much difficulty making allies. But it's useless to try to tell her this. A goddess can dress however she pleases, as far as Ishtar is concerned. In any case the costume is part of her conditioning. It's her uniform, part of her identity, and she can't make herself change it.

Ishtar has what some might describe as an unhealthy lack of fear. She firmly believes that she is destined to prevail and it does not occur to her that mere mortals might be able to do her serious harm. Yet she fears both Ashur and Mordak, which puzzles and confuses her. If Ishtar is operating on her own (which almost never happens) she will be slow to retreat and have trouble recognizing that she is in danger. If however she is with the rest of

the team, she will obey Mordak's orders unquestioningly and fall back whenever he says.

If a "mere mortal" were to seriously defeat Ishtar, humiliating and injuring her badly, it would change her personality. Unable to deal with the trauma, and without any emotional support from her teammates (who would react with disgust and contempt) she would become far more withdrawn and then start hurting civilians at every opportunity. She would also become totally, implacably focused on bloody, homicidal revenge against whoever beat her.

Adventures With Ishtar:

1) Not That Kind of Moon Goddess

Ishtar finds to her shock that she is attracted to a female PC. Completely unable to cope with or understand these feelings, she sets out to find the object of her affections, and fight her. First she will attack any of the PC's male compatriots in a jealous fury. Then she will want to fight the PC again and again, seeking her out for more single combat at every opportunity. Ishtar will want to get physical and wrestle with the PC whenever they fight—not her usual style at all. As they grapple, she will praise her opponent's skill and talk about how much she respects her as something like an equal. Can she be a goddess and not know it?

It should become pathetically obvious that she has a crush on the PC after a few of these encounters, and that she doesn't realize it. If the Players somehow fail to grasp what is going on, then let them discover one of Ishtar's temporary lairs, and find pictures of the PC all over the wall. If they still fail to understand, then at some point Ishtar blurts out that she wants the PC to come away and live with her, and be like sisters together, and wrestle every day and comb each others' hair.

If at any point the PCs confront her with the true nature of her feelings, or worse, if the object of her affections responds in an overtly romantic way (by kissing her, for example) she will be utterly flummoxed and horrified and will attempt to kill first the PC, then anyone else who knows

about this shameful matter and then herself.

2) An Afternoon at the Gallery

Ishtar learns that a collection or archeological treasures from Mosul is about to go on display at the Louvre (or some other big museum that's easier for your Player Characters to reach). These are artifacts sacred to the ancient cult of Ishtar.

Curious, she decides to go see if there is anything she would like to reclaim as her personal property. When she explains this to Mordak, he agrees to let her go—the whole thing catches his imagination. Ishtar flies off to Paris (or wherever the GM decides the museum is located) to attend the opening of the new exhibit. She gets spotted approaching the city, and fighter jets are called out to intercept her. She blasts them out of the air, and the PCs get called in.

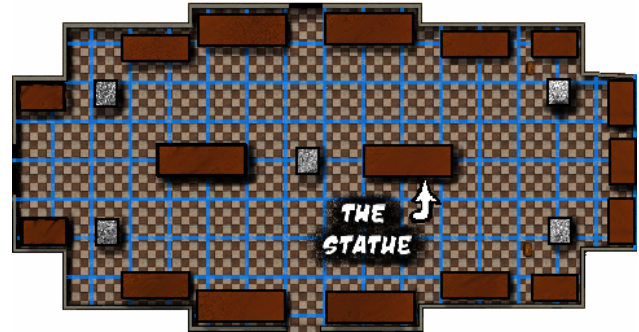
What is her target? Where is the rest of Team Elugal? Can the PCs figure out where and how to intercept her in time?

The local police and military have hastily mobilized a defense in front of the museum. She cuts right through them, and if the PCs don't stop her she walks inside, where it will become much more difficult to stop her without one or another priceless work of art getting damaged.

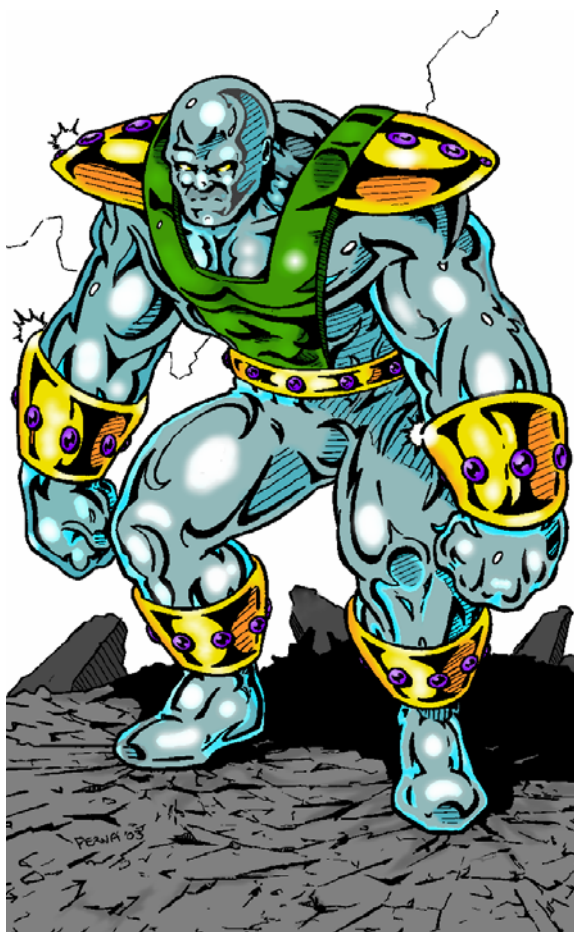
When she reaches the exhibit, she will stroll around, peering intently at the objects on display, mildly puzzled at the fact that none of them look even vaguely familiar. Then she comes across a weathered clay statue of the goddess, whose face bears a remarkable resemblance, not to Ishtar herself, but to a female PC whom she has fought. Offended, Ishtar attempts to smash the object, and then turns on her heel and leaves, no longer interested in the exhibit. She is in a bad mood and is even more likely than usual to react with lethal force. If she ever sees that PC again, she will attack her in preference to all other targets.

Why does the statue look like one of the PCs? It's a coincidence, unless of course the GM decides that it's something else.

MAP OF THE GALLERY



ASHUR



"No such thing as conduct unbecoming a god."

Real Name: Ashur

PL: 13

Str: 46 (+18) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 44 (+17)
Int: 11 (+0) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 8 **Defense:** 9
Toughness Save: 17 (12 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 17 **Reflexes Save:** 2
Willpower Save: 5 (8 vs. mental attacks)

Skills: Bluff 10 (+13) Intimidate 10 (+13), Sense Motive 3 (+6)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Diehard, Endurance, Fearsome Presence 8, Improved Overrun, Improved Pin, Power Attack, Startle, Taunt

Powers: Immunity (to aging, cold, disease, fatigue, heat, poison, pressure, radiation, starvation, suffocation), Impervious Toughness 12, Leaping 8, Mind Shield 3, Sensory Protection 5, Super-Strength 10 (Maximum Load: 12.5 Thousand tons; Power Feats: Groundstrike, Shockwave, Super-Breath, Thunderclap)

Complications: Slave of Mordak (compelled to do whatever Mordak says, even if it's severely contrary to Ashur's interests or inclinations), Slobbering sadistic sociopath who would rather hurt innocent bystanders than an actual opponent, even if this puts him at a tactical disadvantage.

Background: Ashur, god of war, mighty, fierce and proud protector of the land between the two rivers. The man who bears his name barely resembles him. They didn't even spell the name right (it's supposed to be "Anshur"). This Ashur is no valiant holy warrior, no stern and righteous upholder of the sacred law. He's a brute, plain and simple. A vicious, sick, sadistic sociopath with a pathological compulsion to inflict pain and death. It's impossible to reach out to him as a human being, and it's extremely dangerous to show any kind of weakness around him, since it draws his attention like blood draws sharks.

He's a killer, to be sure, but he likes to give out pain even more than death. He can't feel pain himself, or anything else through his living metal skin, and watching others suffer is as close as he can get. Most of all he likes to hurt things that are small and helpless. It would feel even better to hurt someone who trusted him, he senses, but of course no one ever has. Fear and emotional distress aren't as tasty to him as actual physical pain, but he does enjoy them, too, so he taunts his opponents in combat and subjects anyone within reach to as much psychological abuse as he can get away with giving them. An accomplished bully, he has a knack for knowing just what to say to make someone feel hurt or afraid.

Normally a guy like Ashur wouldn't be at home on a team. He's incapable of making plans, he resents any authority and he contradicts anything anyone else says just to get into fights with them. He's also

so obsessed with hurting people that you would expect him to constantly get distracted with harming innocent bystanders. Yet he is somehow compelled, against his will, to follow Mordak's orders and Mordak keeps him on a very tight leash. Ashur would like nothing more than to break loose and go on a bloody rampage, killing anyone who crosses his path. Mordak has to regularly stop him from doing this. This has forced Ashur to become good at devising excuses to kill or maim their allies and servants, although here too Mordak restrains him more than he would like.

Ashur cares nothing for his status as a god, but knows that if he says someone isn't showing him the respect due his divinity, Mordak is more likely to say that it's okay to kill them.

Is he a god? Ashur has no idea, but if he had to think about it he would suppose that he probably is not. He actually has stronger memories of his previous life than anyone else on the team. He's pretty sure that he was once a policeman or a soldier or both. But he doesn't care and feels totally untroubled by his memories. Why would it matter whether or not he's divine, when there are so many people to hurt? He hasn't shared these thoughts with his teammates because he sees no reason to.

In battle, Ashur has a bad habit of picking on the weakest target and focusing his efforts on them alone, even after they've been incapacitated or killed. Weakness gets him excited, as mentioned above. Mordak often has to waste time and energy directing him on the battlefield. While Ashur would be happy to engage in any low, despicable tactic you might care to name, here too Mordak keeps him carefully in check. He's not allowed to take hostages. Nor is he permitted to lash out at random passers-by if there are actual enemies to fight on the scene. He chafes badly at these restrictions, as he does at any constraints on his behavior. He has tried quarreling with and bullying his teammates, but Mordak always tells him to stop it before he gets to have much fun.

Adventures With Ashur:

1) A Cunning Plan That Cannot Fail



Ashur conceives a cunning plan to free himself of Mordak's influence. At least it seems like a cunning plan to Ashur. He sneaks away from the rest of the team and before his conditioning can compel him to go back to them, he finds a PC sorcerer or psychic and offers them a deal. If they will free him from Mordak's domination, he will serve them for a year and a day, doing only as they command.

If no one in your PC group has the right kind of powers, then a nervous little magician who calls himself "Doctor Delphi" is visiting the PCs when Ashur appears and offers his terms. Dr. Delphi, if you use him, is a bit of a pompous ham and a worrywart besides, but he's a decent fellow underneath it and his magical abilities are certainly real. Can Ashur's evil power finally be put to good use?

There is, alas, a catch, but it's one the PCs may be able to think their way past. Mordak's hold on Ashur's mind can indeed be broken by anyone with access to Mind Control. It's not easy (DC 24) and if you fail the giant brute is likely to get bored and start killing people. However, anyone who takes the trouble to read Ashur's mind while they're poking around in it will learn that he has no intention of serving the person who freed him, and is in fact looking forward to peeling the meat from their bones while they frantically command him to stop. But it is a simple matter for a mind-controller to replace Ashur's compulsion to obey Mordak with a compulsion to obey themselves. Just roll as though attempting to take over his mind normally.

Ashur will be quite annoyed if he wakes up to find that he really has become

the PCs' slave, but he will grudgingly bear it with his usual bad grace. He requires a lot of direction as a minion and is always trying to subvert the intention of his orders (although he's not smart enough to be very adept at it).

Anyone who makes Ashur their slave becomes a magnet for trouble. The US armed forces think it's safer to kill him than to try to use him (and they may be right!) Muslim fanatics who hate Team Elugal will want to attack him. His teammates will want to come find him and release him from the PCs' thrall (by killing them).

The moment Mordak speaks to the enslaved Ashur, his compulsion to obey the team leader reasserts itself, but becomes impossible to reconcile with his compulsion to obey the PCs. His brain locks up and he falls unconscious to the ground leaving the PCs and perhaps poor Dr. Delphi to face Team Elugal without him. Ashur will remain unconscious for weeks, which is at least some small consolation. Just think about all the innocent people he won't be able to hurt!

When he wakes up he will once more be under Mordak's control. He will now hate the PCs and will seek revenge against them.

Doctor Delphi



PL: 10

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus** 4 **Defense:** 8

Toughness Save: 1 **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 14

Skills: Bluff 10 (+13), Concentrate 10 (+15), Diplomacy 5 (+8), Escape Artist 8 (+11), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 9 (+13), Knowledge (Art) 4 (+8), Knowledge (History) 6 (+10), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 6 (+10), Languages (Arabic, Aramaic, Chaldean, English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Sumerian, Tibetan), Notice 2 (+7), Perform (Acting) 5 (+8), Sense Motive 3 (+8), Stealth 3 (+6), Sleight of Hand 7 (+10)

Feats: Distract (Linked to Bluff), Fascinate (Linked to Bluff), Trance

Powers: Magic 10 (Spells: ESP; Power Feats: Alternate Powers [Illusion, Mind Control, Teleportation (Maximum Range 1,000 feet; Extended Range: 200,000 miles; Power Feats: Change Direction, Change Velocity)] Telepathy), Super-Senses (Magical Awareness, Precognition), Super-Movement (Dimensional Movement, to magical dimensions; Flaw: Unreliable)

Complications: Makes pompous, theatrical speeches about the power of magic and the illusory nature of the world. Strongly opposed to using violence to solve problems, won't willingly harm anyone or anything.

2) A Different Cunning Plan That Also Cannot Fail

Ashur conceives another, still more cunning plan to get out from under Mordak's thumb. He has noticed from watching Eshrikigel that you don't have to follow the leader's instructions if you can't understand them. This seems like a good loophole to Ashur, who steals some drugs from a dead US Army medic.

But even though he now has more than enough morphine to put him into the right kind of fog, there is no way for him to inject himself with it. His skin is much too tough for a needle or injector gun to have any kind of effect on him. He tries eating the morphine ampules, but that doesn't work either. He tries shooting them into his skin with a gun, but it just bounces off and makes a mess. Soon he is out of drugs.

The PCs get drawn into this matter when Ashur starts attacking drug dealers in

public parks. This could happen either in the US, if Team Elugal has already crossed the Atlantic, or in Iraq, where there is certainly no shortage of drug dealers either. Why is he attacking dealers? Has he turned over a new leaf?

If the PCs go investigate this odd course of events, the PCs find Ashur fairly quickly. He has just beaten up a dealer and stolen his drugs. When he spots the PCs, he offers them a deal.

If they can use their powers to help him inject a monster load of dope into his tongue (the one place he thinks he might be vulnerable enough to do it—he's already tried his eyeballs), he will tell them where the rest of the team is hiding. He can't tell them now, his conditioning prevents him from betraying his comrades, but once his bloodstream is full of enough controlled substances, that won't be a problem anymore.

The GM should allow the PCs to improvise various ways to help Ashur shoot up. Super-Strength, gadgeteering, energy projection and teleportation could all prove useful here. Set the difficulty fairly high—25 or more, depending on what they do. Ashur can't stay long, his conditioning is already compelling him to return to the group, so you can only give them a few tries.

If they fail to help him, he swears revenge. It doesn't matter how hard they tried. If they don't get him out from under Mordak's thumb, Ashur intends to come do terrible things to them. Whether or not he ever gets to depends on whether he encounters them on the battlefield again—he doesn't have time to run off and seek unauthorized vengeance on his own. Should the PCs run into Team Elugal once more, Ashur ignores the mission objective and gets totally focused on doing them harm.

If they do manage to inject Ashur with the drugs, he lapses into a slurred stupor and becomes nearly incapable of coherent speech. Yet he is able to tell the PCs where his teammates are (they're in their mobile command center, hidden under a bridge just a few blocks away).

Unfortunately, Ashur is now able to do what he's always wanted most—kill

everybody he sees. And the PCs are the closest people in the vicinity. Fortunately, his brain is now so screwed up that his Offensive and Defensive bonuses are both reduced by six.

After the PCs have had a chance to fight him for a little while and keep him from doing some unspeakable things to civilians, his teammates may come looking for him.

BAAL



"Life is a hideous thing, but at least it's brief."

PL: 12

Real Name: Baal

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)

Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)

Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 11

Defense: 10

Toughness Save: 12 (10 Impervious)

Fortitude Save: 10 **Reflexes Save:** 4

Willpower Save: 12

Skills: Diplomacy 5 (+8), Knowledge (History) 5 (+9), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 4 (+8), Languages (Arabic, English, French, Kurdish), Notice 5 (+8), Sense Motive 6 (+9)

Feats: Diehard, Fearsome Presence 5

Powers: ESP (Visual and Auditory) 4 (Range: 5 miles), Illusion 10 (All Sense Groups; Power Feats: Progression 5 [illusions cover a 250 foot area], Selective; Extra: Action; Flaw: Phantasms), Immunity (to aging, cold, disease, fatigue, heat,

illusions, invisibility, poison, pressure, radiation, starvation, suffocation), Impervious Protection 10, Invisibility 3 (Concealment from hearing and from all visual senses; Flaw: Does Not work on cameras, recording devices, constructs or other non-intelligent entities), Sensory Protection 5

Complications: Slave of Mordak (compelled to do whatever Mordak says, even if it's severely contrary to Baal's interests or inclinations, even if it's obviously suicidal).

Background: Baal is mortified at being a supervillain, let alone anything as absurd as a living god. Still, as embarrassing as this is, he seems to be stuck with it, so he plays along.

A thoughtful, educated man, Baal knows enough about Babylonian mythology to realize that he does not belong in it. Baal isn't a Mesopotamian deity—he's a Phoenician god. Anyway Team Elugal

doesn't bear anything but a superficial resemblance to the Babylonian pantheon. And who ever said Baal had the ability to cast illusions? It doesn't make any sense! Nor does he have anything but weary contempt for the Baath party and the way it bled Iraq dry. Yet he is compelled to believe in his own divinity, to follow Mordak's orders and to help return the Baathists to power. He has coped with these contradictions by getting really depressed.

Mordant, gloomy and given to grim jests, he often has a wry, ironic smile and is forever making funny, sad, cynical observations about life. He's so unhappy and so over-the-top about it that it's actually quite amusing, at times.

Mordak is baffled by Baal's negative attitude, but unlike Ashur, Baal really does seem to try hard and can be relied upon not to wander off and do anything stupid, so Mordak tolerates his odd moods. And when he isn't so depressed that he's forgetful, Baal is a careful, skilled combatant, adept at using his powers to confound and puzzle the enemy. He's best in a support role and even better when kept out of the enemy's sight, but Mordak doesn't understand that and keeps putting him on point with heavy hitters like Ashur and Eshrikigel. While Baal is certainly effective when he's throwing imaginary monsters at the opposition, he's even better at things like making the team appear to be slightly off their actual positions, concealing ambushes, blocking lines of fire and all the other subtle tactical tricks an illusionist can create. It's almost a shame that Mordak doesn't use him more in this capacity.

Baal is the only member of the team never to have personally killed anyone, but it's not because he feels moral qualms about it. His powers just aren't very well suited to doing direct physical harm. In fact he's so wrapped up in his own unhappiness that he's incapable of feeling much of anything for other people, even though he is aware that this is irresponsible and wrong of him. And like a lot of seriously unhappy people, he's prone to lashing out impulsively for no good reason.

He sometimes catches glimpses of

old, half-buried memories, little incomprehensible snippets on the edge of his perception. He doesn't experience this nearly as vividly as Mordak or Ashur, but he's better at interpreting it than either of them, and he knows it confirms that his present existence is a lie. But then, isn't all existence, he asks with a rueful smile.

No one, including Baal himself, is aware that he's on the very edge of a nervous breakdown. If he does suffer a collapse, it will seriously disrupt his conditioning and temporarily break Mordak's hold over him. Baal will become extremely dangerous during his mental crisis and may turn homicidal towards his teammates or anyone else who gets too close to him. Worse, Ashur will see that it's possible to break Mordak's grip, and will start getting ideas.

Adventures with Baal:

1) Magical Misery Tour

Baal decides that he likes one of the PCs (this should either be a particularly mordant and "dark" character or else an especially happy, wholesome one) and decides to give them a treat. He appears to them unexpectedly, and offers to lead them on a tour of what he calls *"The secret history of the universe."*

He walks by their side as reality parts to reveal a mass of whirling stars at the beginning of creation. This is all an illusion of course, Baal isn't even really there, and the whole vision is tainted by his morbid, nihilistic sense of humor. He shows them the origin of mankind (God and his angels laughing and pointing at an ugly, lumpen, bewildered Adam, who has clearly been created as a nasty joke), the rise of civilization (a bewildering succession of kings murdering one another in fast-forward motion, to the theme music of "The Benny Hill Show.") and many other events, old and new, seen from his exhausted, world-weary and hopeless perspective.

The GM might consider dropping in some major revelation about their game universe or the PC's own origins, distorting it so that it looks like a joke, or even use this as a chance to provide a hint about Team Elugal's origins. It may interest the PC to

note that neither Islam nor the religion of ancient Babylon seem to play any role in Baal's private cosmology, which seems much more derived from pop culture and literature.

"So you see" he says at the end of the tour "despite life's unending carnival of horrors, at least you can find contentment in the fact that it doesn't actually mean anything. No vast and sinister design, no cosmic fiend gloating wickedly at our wretchedness. It's just a pointless accident, and it's easy to forgive an accident. No purpose in raging against it. Does that make you feel better?" he sighs. "Me neither."

Baal is willing to waste a lot of time showing his vision to the PC—more time than is safe, in fact. He's somewhere in the vicinity, directing the illusion and he's totally distracted by the effort of creating it. This could be the perfect time to capture him.

2) A Pillar of Smoke by Day

Baal can take it no more and suffers a complete nervous breakdown. Incapable of hearing or understanding Mordak's orders any longer, he goes on a demented rampage, walking into an urban area surrounded by a whirling column of horrible, terrifying illusions, spreading chaos and panic in his wake.

After he has managed to tangle up traffic into a hopeless snarl and send hordes of terrified civilians stampeding in every

direction, he collapses in a public park and lies there sobbing. A giant churning pillar of illusory horrors surrounds him, stretching up into the sky. It's a roiling mass of fanged mouths, burning skulls, demon babies with stinging tentacles for eyes and chainsaws for fingers, and whatever other sick, crazy awfulness his tormented brain can produce.

The PCs get called in to restore order and to find out what is causing this wide-scale urban chaos. After they have dealt with the panicked crowds and car accidents, they find the center of the problem—a column of spinning, writhing, ever-changing demonic shapes. It seems to reach up into the sky. What is it? Some kind of extradimensional rift? A djinn gone berserk? Whatever this phenomenon is, it does not appear on photographs or video. Is it physically dangerous?

If the PCs can muster the bravery to force their way inside, they will find Baal slumped on a park bench, sobbing in hopeless despair. If the PCs talk to him calmly and patiently, he will be willing to tell them who he is and what's going on here. He's too depressed to make any effort to resist capture. The column of hideous illusions vanishes once he's rendered unconscious or has calmed down enough to get a grip on himself.

Anyone who takes him into custody should be very careful. The rest of the team is already on its way to rescue him.

eshrikigel



"I cut off my head and flung it to the heavens, where angels worship it. Ha!"

Real Name: Eshrikigel

PL: 12

Str: 36 (+8) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 38 (+9)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 14
Defense: 12

Toughness Save: 12 (10 Impervious)

Fortitude Save: 12 **Reflexes Save:** 14

Willpower Save: 0 (7 vs. mental attacks)

Skills: Intimidate 10 (+13), Notice 5 (+5)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Diehard, Environmental Adaptation (Aerial Combat), Fearsome Presence 8, Improved Grab, Improved Overrun, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Rage 2, Startle, Takedown Attack

Powers: Blast 12; Flight 12 (Maximum Speed: 50,000 MPH—Mach 66!), Immunity (to aging, cold, disease, fatigue, heat, poison, pressure, radiation, starvation, suffocation), Impervious Toughness 10, Mind Shield 7, Protection 3, Sensory Shield 10, Super-Senses 4 (Darkvision, Extended Vision 2), Super-Strength 8 (Maximum Lift:

800 Tons; Power Feats: Shockwave, Super-Breath)

Complications: Completely and totally crazy, does random, irrational, foolhardy things, compelled to obey Mordak (provided of course that she's lucid enough to understand what he's saying).

Background: Queen of destruction, hand-maiden of chaos, bringer of panic, devastation and doom—there is no such character in Babylonian mythology, but Eshrikigel is much too crazy to know or care.

She is even less stable than Ashur and Baal. In fact she's utterly, totally mad. Aggressive and violent, Eshrikigel spends much of her time lost in crazed religious rapture and blood-soaked fantasies. The rest of the time she's an unpredictable loose cannon, prone to killing and maiming people for no discernable reason. She is excited by fast movement, loud noises and bright colors. Whether or not she injures anybody is purely incidental to her. She likes hurting people, but only because they get all excited

and thrash around and make loud noises.

The only reason that she is capable of functioning on a battlefield at all is that she's under a psychological compulsion to follow Mordaks' orders. Of course, she can only follow his orders when she can understand them, which is only about half the time, so she requires constant guidance and he's forever wasting time and effort trying to direct her.

It's not hard to tell that she's psychotic or that she genuinely believes herself to be some kind of deity. It is difficult to be sure whether or not her elaborate fantasy world bears any resemblance to either the mythology of ancient Mesopotamia, or Team Elugal's distorted version of it.

Like many psychotics, she talks non-stop and seems to be unable to control the torrent of words that come out of her in a demented tumble. At times her ranting is almost beautiful, almost like poetry, full of blazing, vivid imagery. It would be a mistake to let this distract you from how dangerous she is. Eshrikigel is not capable of empathy, kindness or restraint. Her insanity makes her far too self-absorbed to be able to care about others. While she has no idea what honor, mercy or restraint might be, she's also not coherent enough to think of torturing someone for information, hitting an opponent by surprise or taking hostages. She's never sneaky, for the most part she just attacks targets head on unless Mordak is able to get her to do otherwise.

Sometimes it's easy to tell what she's about to do next, because she will blurt out everything she's thinking. At other times she's totally unpredictable, especially if she's feeling uncommunicative and depressed. For the most part she is happy, with plenty of fights to get in, enemies to rend and things to smash. More than anything else she loves to fly, and she gets to do a lot of it. It's a good thing for her that she's able to do it instinctively, or she would have long since suffered a fatal crash. She's still a hopelessly unsafe aerialist, prone to crazy hairsbreadth maneuvers that no sane flyer would ever attempt.

If she has any lingering, flickering memories of her life before she became

Eshrikigel, she does not appear to be troubled by them. Perhaps she simply doesn't understand them.

Adventures With Eshrikigel:

1) An Angel in Babylon

Eshrikigel feels almost sane when she flies. Her long aerial jaunts are the only time she knows something like peace.

On one of her flights she sails far out over the eastern Baghdad suburbs, and lands in the slum called Sadr City. This is a bad part of town, a hotbed of anti-American sentiment and the most extreme kind of Shiite religious fanaticism. It is run by the Islamic militia known as the Madhi's Army. Cops enter this place only in force.

After sitting for a while, watched by curious onlookers, Eshrikigel stands up and makes one of her long, crazy speeches. No one listens—they're all much too horrified by the way she is dressed to pay any attention to the crazy stuff she is saying. Soon an angry mob gathers, determined to punish her for her immodest, indecent clothing. Eshrikigel is too insane to know that they can't hurt her, and lashes out at the crowd in a panic. Now militia units from the Madhi's army are converging on her position and the whole thing is about to turn from a riot into a battle.

The PCs get sent in to quell some kind of superhero-related disturbance in Sadr City. They arrive at around the same time as the Madhi's paramilitary units. Everyone will want to attack the PCs. Can they somehow separate the combatants before a lot of civilians get hurt or the rest of Team Elugal comes to their lunatic comrade's aid? Could this be the right moment to finally capture Eshrikigel? Or is the risk of collateral damage so great that they'd do better just to drive her away?

LEGION OF THE DAMNED

Membership: The inner circle or “Core Command Working Group” includes the Aleph, Captain Sinister, Doctor Dagon, Ultra-Woman, the Bowhunter, and sometimes calls on the Crimson Shadow in an advisory capacity. The strange, mordant winged creatures known as Hellraven and Vulture Man hang around the Working Group, and are allowed to come and go as they please, despite their lack of any official status with the team.

The pool of indentured “Associate Members” consists of Doctor Zed (The so-called “Martian Maneater”), Roadrash (formerly known as the Blue Bolt), The Black Sun, Microbastard and the Screaming Shrike.

The loosely organized Affiliate Members include Celestial Fist of Harmony, John Thunder and any other supervillains you would like to add.

In addition, if some disaster ever were to overcome the team, they know how to free the dreaded Terror Twins from their earthly prison and unleash them on mankind, although it’s hard to see what kind of catastrophe would be terrible enough to justify setting these demonic shapeshifting horrors loose.

Background: Have you ever wondered why superheroes never change the world? Some people whisper of a powerful and sinister group that crushes any super-being who tries too hard. A secretive band of metahumans with enormous resources and vast individual strength who quietly obliterate any threat to the existing order of things. They don’t want to rule the world, it is said, for they serve the people who already do.

Perhaps the most powerful and

secretive supervillain group in existence, the Legion of the Damned has outlasted six presidential administrations and countless superhero teams. For thirty years they have quietly pursued their strange agenda, unknown to the world at large. For the most part they watch and wait, but every so often they crush a superhero or villain. No one really seems to know how they choose their targets or why. Yet there are persistent rumors that they serve the interests who secretly run the world, and have been entrusted with the job of destroying whatever threatens it. Whether or not this is true, they certainly have the backing of some of the world’s wealthiest men.

The team’s nominal leader is the unbelievably powerful and dangerous psychic known only as the Aleph. It is run on a day-to-day-basis by his second in command, the unsavory Captain Sinister. But the Legion answers to a higher power, a mysterious Steering Committee. We don’t know who serves on the Committee, but the Legion’s job is to kill anyone who threatens its interests. Since they also kill anyone who poses a serious threat to the established social order, we can conclude that whoever is on the Steering Committee, they are rich and secure.

Even when they aren’t on any secret missions, the Legion manages to get in plenty of trouble. Vengeful and paranoid, they are forever plotting revenge against one or another hero who defeated them or made them look stupid.

Threat Level: This is about as bad as it gets. If there are worse supervillain teams out there, then it’s hard to see why they haven’t taken over the world yet. The Legion’s reach is global, its methods are

murderous, its power is second to none. It's not so much a question of whether they could take over the world as it is of whether or not they already rule it. The real challenge for the GM is to give the PCs some way to thwart them.

Base of Operations: The Legion of the Damned has three huge bases, each one the size of a skyscraper, built at unbelievable expense. One floats invisibly in orbit (and is increasingly in need of a major systems overhaul), one rests on the bed of the Atlantic ocean, four miles below the surface of the waves, and one occupies the upper floors of a fortified building in the heart of a major American city (the GM can decide which one). All three are linked by a network of teleportation gates.

While there are also gates that lead from the bases into dozens of locations around the world, the Legion cannot change the locations of any of these gates or create new ones. They cannot simply appear at the site of a potential threat, destroy it and vanish again. They actually have to travel under their own power to the target location from the nearest gate. The GM should decide where the gates are located, so that it neither makes things too easy or too inconvenient for the Legionnaires.

The group's leaders (the so-called "Core Command Working Group") all maintain private apartments in each of the bases, except for Doctor Dagon, who can't be persuaded to stay overnight in any of them.

Organization: Some of the world's greatest villains serve in the Legion's Core Command Working Group, and most of them have agendas of their own to pursue when they aren't running the Steering Committee's errands. The "associate" members have far less independence. They live like prisoners in one or another of the Legion's bases, unable to leave without permission, and then only on brief furloughs that seldom last more than a few days.

Many of the world's premier super-criminals have vanished into the ranks of the Legion of the Damned, their respective reigns of evil suddenly and mysteriously

terminated. The Steering Committee explains to them that this is their chance to repay society for all the harm they have done to it, by spending the rest of their lives as its secret protectors.

In addition to the Core Command Working Group and the Associates, the Legion also has some "Affiliate" members scattered around the world—independent supervillains who have cut a deal with the Legion and do its bidding from time to time. They do their best to lie low and not interfere with the Legion's plans or inconvenience its masters, taking on missions when asked. They are not well trusted by the Core Command Working Group and are treated as expendable on the battlefield. If you own a copy of Plain Brown Wrapper Games' first supervillain supplement "The Bad Guys" then Black Thunder would make an excellent affiliate member of the Legion of the Damned. Feel free to add other villains to their ranks as seems appropriate.

The Core Command Working Group consists of the Aleph, his two chief acolytes Captain Sinister and Ultra-Woman, the mysterious undersea overlord known as Doctor Dagon and the obnoxious Bowhunter, whose father is on the Steering Committee and who is therefore too well-connected to be asked to leave the Working Group, despite having no superpowers and constantly making an annoyance of himself.

While the fiendish old nightstalker known as the Crimson Shadow is officially only an Affiliate member of the team, he in fact serves on the Core Command Working Group in an advisory capacity. The old spider's encyclopedic knowledge of all the superbeings who have challenged him over the years is too rich to be left unused. The Aleph also likes him for some reason (which may make him the only person on earth who does).

The Command Core Working Group has official meeting chambers in all three of the Legion's headquarters, but seldom uses them, meeting largely by teleconference. Doctor Dagon rarely attends and the Crimson Shadow never does unless the other Working Group members have some specific question to ask him. The Aleph

himself is seldom present, although he often speaks to Captain Sinister and Ultra-Woman in their dreams. Since his participation in the events over Nagasaki in 1945 he hasn't been able to manifest himself in the physical world for more than brief periods of time, so he acts as more of a guiding presence to the team than as a hands-on leader. He will suddenly appear when the rest of the team is in trouble, but after mashing their enemies to a sticky pulp he usually vanishes again. This is just as well. The man is too crazy to lead much of anything. In the Aleph's absence, Captain Sinister runs things—and runs them well for a megalomaniac.

Sometimes the Aleph will unexpectedly turn up in person at one of the Core Command Working Group's meetings. When he does, look out! There is no telling what he might do.

The Legion's rules and codes of behavior are elaborate, meant to cover every possible contingency. They call them "The Code of the Damned" or simply "The Code" and house them in a huge black book on a lectern in each of their meeting halls. The code tells them how to resolve conflicts among themselves, how Associate members are to show deference and respect to the members of the Core Command Working Group, how to run meetings and how to discipline rule breakers for disobeying the organization's innumerable by-laws. Captain Sinister is an expert in the Code (and in bending it to his advantage) and relies on it heavily. However, whenever the Aleph appears in person, things get much more unpredictable. He pays no attention to the Code at all, and meets out arbitrary, savage punishments seemingly at random. If he shows up at a meeting, at least one of the Associate Members is likely to die in some awful way for no discernable reason.

Rather than go into all the intricacies of the Code, we can roughly state that it forbids insubordination, talking out of turn, picking fights with other members, killing other members in fights that were agreed to be non-lethal, interrupting a member of the Core Command Working Group while they are transacting Legion business, and talking to anyone about what

the Legion is and does. There are many exceptions to all of these rules except the last one.

Tactics: The Legion seldom attacks in a single unit. Fractious, disorganized and riven by mistrust, they are much more likely to send two or three members to deal with a threat than they are to send the whole team. Even then they are unlikely to coordinate their powers very much or to bother with subtle, complex stratagems (unless Captain Sinister himself is leading the group). For the most part, they just hit the target with overwhelming force and take them down as fast as possible.

If Captain Sinister comes in person, he will put his formidable tactical skills into play and make things even more difficult for our heroes, stacking the deck in his favor as much as possible, hitting from ambush, drawing the PCs onto ground that favors him, throwing subtle illusions at them to make them misjudge the situation and so forth.

Using the Legion of the Damned in

Your Campaign: This group is trickier to use than any of the others in this book. They're just too tough! I've built them in such a way that they can be incorporated into your campaign without having to make them its whole focus, but they're so big that they're still going to have a serious effect on the shape of your campaign world. Fortunately for the GM, they are intent on keeping the world the way it is, instead of changing it. This should not mean that the PCs should count on them to bail the Earth out of trouble the next time some arch-criminal threatens to destroy it.

The players and their characters shouldn't really understand the Legion's motivations well enough to expect them to foil any world-threatening plots. If your players ask you why they have to go defeat some would-be world conqueror when the Legion of the Damned should already be pounding them flat for menacing the Steering Committee's profits, you can always say that the Committee hasn't found out about this threat yet, or that they're not taking it seriously enough, so the whole

planet is in jeopardy.

The Steering Committee: Who is on it? What do they want? They're the men who run the world and they want to keep running it. I don't want to try to impose any paranoid notions of my own about who runs the world on you (after all, what if you disagree?) so for the most part we're leaving their identities in your hands.

Over the course of the character adventures presented below, we reveal the names and backgrounds of three different members of the Committee. Stanton Glazier III and B. Fenton King Sr. are both unbelievably wealthy East Coast old-money patriarchs. Glazier's wealth goes back four generations (his great-grandfather was one of the country's most prominent industrialists) and Mr. King's family has been one of the richest and most powerful in America since the 18th century. Jubal Lovelady is a mine owner from West Virginia who has created a financial empire that spreads across most of the country (he's also a pariah on the Steering Committee, thought of as vulgar, crass and nouveau-riche by most of his fellow members). Another Committee member is one of the entertainment industry's leading power-players (although we don't name him specifically) and one may be a sentient computer who is dedicated to wiping out competing artificial intelligences wherever it can find them.

This makes it sound as though the Steering Committee is primarily a club for rich businessmen. However, there are actually about fifteen men on the Committee, so if you prefer, these five could be atypical members.

Are the others a cabal of ancient ex-Nazis? Serpent Men from the Earth's lost ages? The heads of the world's most dangerous organized crime families? An alliance of masked master villains from the 1930s? Aliens? High-level government bureaucrats in league with aliens? Or just more rich old white guys? That's up to you. They shouldn't have superhuman powers of their own (apart from their wealth) and they should inspire fear—apart from that it's all a question of how your campaign world

works.

Adventures With the Legion of the Damned: 1) The Empty Earth, Full of Nothing



In January of 1944, the Third Reich's Office of Special Sciences sent a secret expedition to Spitzbergen, under the leadership of the famed arctic explorer and mystic Dr. Niemann Pfluger. He was reputedly seeking some pre-human artifact of unbelievable occult power—something that might turn the tide of the war. Spitzbergen lies far above the Arctic Circle. It's one of the most barren and inhospitable places on the face of the earth. It was also deep inside Soviet territory, making the mission even more dangerous. The team brought along one of Dr. Helmut Abgrund's mole-machines at enormous expense, so they must have thought they would be tunneling into something.

But whatever Dr. Pfluger sought, it wasn't there. They found what they initially thought were a set of gigantic alien ruins, but turned out in fact to be a naturally occurring rock formation. They sat in camp, unsure how to proceed next, and Dr. Pfluger sunk into a deep dark depression. Unable to make any decisions, paralyzed by his unhappiness, he let them stay on the island too long and the weather got too bad for them to leave. He also didn't issue any standing instructions about how frequently to clean the camp stoves, so within three weeks everyone but Dr. Pfluger himself had died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

In March a Kriegsmarine rescue expedition arrived and they got Dr. Pfluger out of Spitzbergen. His superiors (especially Heinrich Himmler) were extremely interested to hear what had happened to him, but he didn't recover from his nervous breakdown until after the Reich fell.

A member of one of Germany's oldest and noblest families, Neimann Pfluger did quite well for himself in the post-war Nazi diaspora. He never completely recovered from his debilitating episode in 1944, and was always quiet, shy and odd. This gave him a mysterious reputation. He did not speak of the failed expedition, though his fellow ex-Nazis whispered about it behind his back. There was talk of lost relics older than man, a secret, limitless energy source and even of his having found a passage to the center of this hollow earth, where the Agarthan mystics hoard the lore of the primordial Aryans. He never confirmed or denied any of this talk, which only encouraged people further.

A young man named Stanton Glazier, whose industrialist family maintained close ties with the ex-Nazi community, was entranced by the rumors that surrounded Dr. Pfluger. He grew as close to the strange old man as anyone ever got. Despite Dr. Pfluger never having said one single solitary word to confirm the weird rumors that hung around him, Stanton remained a true believer in the old man's legend to the end of his own life.

One of his sons, Stanton Glazier III, is now a member of the Legion of the Damned's steering committee. He has learned that some of Dr. Pfluger's early journals have come to light, and after having acquired a portion of one of them, he realizes to his shock and dismay that his father was utterly wrong about the man. He can't allow his poor dead father to look a fool in public. So he sets about having anyone who comes into contact with the notebooks killed. His fellow members of the Steering Committee are willing to put up with this eccentric behavior, so long as he doesn't divert the Legion from more important matters. He has lied to them, and told them that the journals actually contain terrible secrets older than humanity, which would change the world if they ever got out. But while most of them suspect the truth, it doesn't seem worth the bother to confront him over it.

Glazier has already managed to locate and destroy the most damaging sections of the journals, but unbeknownst to

him, there are other copies in the ruined camp on Spitzbergen. Some of the remaining fragments have fallen into the possession of a writer named Barry Slack, who discovers that anyone who reads them dies. Slack entrusts the papers to his former girlfriend (use an existing NPC who the Player Characters already know) and when he disappears without a trace, she brings them to the PCs in a panic.

Poor Barry wrote mysteries and paranoid works of dubious journalism. Everyone who knew him thought of him as unreliable, prone to flights of fantasy and far too eager to draw attention to himself. She can't be sure that this isn't all some colossal prank, intended to win her back. But everyone who handled Pfluger's journals before him really does seem to have died or disappeared. She hasn't had time to read them, or anything else except for Barry's note of warning.

If the PCs open the package and read the materials, they find dozens of Xeroxed sheets that seem to recount a desperate voyage to Spitzbergen to recover some unnamed artifact for the Nazi elite. The journals end just as they are unloading the mole-machine from the boat. There are hints that they may have located some kind of ruins up there.

Glazier sends various members of the Legion to retrieve the papers and kill anyone who has read them, in between other jobs, as they become available. This may include characters as powerful as Roadrash or even the Black Sun, but he won't get authorization to send the Aleph and he'll only be able to get Captain Sinister right at the end of the adventure. The PCs find themselves racing around the globe, beset by supervillain attacks, in a frantic attempt to make sense of this mystery before it kills them.

If they make it to Spitzbergen, let them find the ruins of the camp and unearth the rest of Doctor Pfluger's notes. Captain Sinister will arrive shortly after they've read them. If they explain to him what the journals actually contain, he'll laugh aloud and fly back to the orbital base with the evidence.

Captain Sinister is annoyed at

having had to waste his time on such a trivial matter, and he'll let the Steering Committee know that they've been hoodwinked. While they suspected as much, it's harder to politely ignore when it's been rubbed in their face like this. The assassinations are called off, the PCs are left in peace and one of Stanton Glazier's daughters dies in a fake riding accident, as a warning to him. And there the matter rests.

2) Redemption

The Redeemers quietly practice their faith, spread out across the rural parts of western Nebraska, as they have for more than a hundred years. There aren't very many of them—just a few thousand altogether, and although they're as old as the Mormons or the Seventh Day Adventists, they keep a much lower profile. Redeemers don't talk to outsiders about their church or its tenets, so no one has ever heard of them.

The church's High Elders are an ambitious, business-savvy bunch, and despite their low profile, they effectively control two counties on the western edge of the state. All local officials are Redeemers, right down to the deputy sheriffs, all businesses are owned by prominent High Elders. Other churches and outside businesses have a way of burning down. People who proselytize for other faiths tend to disappear.

Women and young people have little status in Redeemer society, where men outnumber women three to one. Girls aren't taught how to read and are raised to know as little about the outside world as possible. The church punishes men with flogging or hanging, and women with being buried alive. Sometimes they kill girls for being ugly, and as result have bred quite a stable of corn-fed beauties, some of whom have gone on to (carefully church-managed) careers in the entertainment industry. This is the real source of the church's wealth—Hollywood. In fact the Los Angeles entertainment world is about the only place where anyone knows about the Redeemers.

Unfortunately, this lucrative trade in obedient, illiterate blondes made too much money to escape the notice of certain

parties, and some years ago a member of the Legion of the Damned's Steering Committee bought the whole church out. We'll leave his identity up to the GM, depending on who and what the Steering Committee really is in your campaign world. It's probably best if he's someone prominent and obnoxious, well-known as a giant in the world of media (Rupert Murdoch? Dick Clark?!). He provides the High Elders with the benefit of his Hollywood contacts and influence. Everyone in Tinseltown is afraid of him, which helps too. The Redeemers are just a side-project, but he derives a bit of income from his share, and won't like having superheroes interfere with it. Which brings us to our adventure.

Keeping girls illiterate and ignorant has allowed the Redeemers to conceal their strange practices for decades, but they may be about to face their first real crisis. Brittany Simpson is one of the few women ever to escape the Redeemers. One of the Player Characters knows her in their secret identity. She's probably a co-worker, but she could be a college classmate or even someone they're dating (but haven't gotten too serious with yet). She lives in the city, downtown, even though she can't afford it and claims to have no family. She's fiercely independent and yet oddly naïve about certain things. She's also embarrassed by her first name, and wants to be called "Lana." She says that's her middle name, but it doesn't appear on her driver's license.

Without any warning, "Lana" suddenly abandons her job and her classes and runs home to the Midwest to see her sister. Either the PC follows her, or she calls them up on the phone in the middle of the night and frantically begs them for help. She gets cut off before she can tell them anything more than where to find her. As an alternative introduction, to get things started quickly, Lana might be a total stranger, who the PCs run into at random, at a rest stop out on the freeway in western Nebraska. In either case, whether the PCs have arranged to meet her at the rest stop, or they don't know her at all, she runs up the exit ramp at midnight, clutching a shotgun and weeping piteously.

Here's what's really going on. Lana

has cut all ties to her community, but does make the occasional phone call to her mother (always from payphones) when she feels too lonely. The last time she called, she learned that one of her sisters, Muffin, has been sentenced to be buried alive for adultery. Mother implied that Brittany's defection had something to do with the harshness of the Elders' judgment.

Muffin is a lot prettier and less willful than Brittany, but she has always been silly and impulsive, a goof-off and a flirt. Brittany used to protect her when they were little girls, even though Muffin was older. Now her other sisters are all in LA and there's no one left to shield poor Muffin.

Guilt-stricken, Brittany/Lana has raced back to Nebraska to rescue her sister with no real plan of action. She failed and now her own life is in danger.

Not long after telling the PCs the rough outline of her troubles, two carloads of stern-faced men in overalls arrive to collect Lana. If the PCs fend them off or lead them on a cross-country chase, the sheriff's department shows up and tries to take Lana away. If the Player Characters evade both the cops and the yokels, word eventually reaches the High Elders and then their Hollywood patron, who calls in the Legion of the Damned.

The Redeemers will bury Muffin alive at the next sunset, in a really tacky plastic coffin. Is there still time to save her?

3) Invisible City

The Invisible City sprawls sideways to the world we know, its glittering streets forever just out of our sight. Trapped in the space between our reality and the next one, it was on its way somewhere when it got stuck in the anteroom to our universe. Its inhabitants can reach us only briefly and only in a few special places where the walls of the world grow thin.

We don't know how long the city has been stuck there beyond the threshold, but we do know that its people first made contact with our world directly in 1948. Hordes of slender, pale, hairless creatures with huge sad eyes poured out into the Nevada desert from dozens of doorways in the air. They acted as though they were

fleeing something. Unfortunately, they arrived just as the Cold War was getting underway. They were met by grim-lipped soldiers with guns, and soon came to fill quite a number of unmarked mass graves out in the desert.

A few weeks later even more portals opened up in New Mexico and more of the fragile, wide-eyed invaders ran through. This time the Army took a few prisoners, but they never survived the interrogation process for long and nothing of interest was learned from them.

Doors opened again in the late 1970s, this time in a much more scattered pattern, all around the globe. Only a few of the slender visitors came through, in little groups. This time they seemed to want to explore our world and make tentative first steps toward contacting Mankind. But by now the Legion of the Damned and its Steering Committee had already appointed themselves to protect the existing social order. The Steering Committee couldn't tell precisely what the city's inhabitants intended, but they deemed it potentially disruptive and had the Legion hunt down the explorers wherever they appeared. The attempt at making contact with humanity was abruptly abandoned and the doors stayed closed for years.

Then, in 1987, a solitary figure emerged from the city. Clad in gleaming armor, equipped with strange weapons and wonderful scientific treasures, he announced himself as the City's ambassador, here to make peace with humanity and share the city's incredible scientific knowledge with our world. He brought gifts with him—cures for two of Mankind's oldest and worst afflictions. A glorious new age was at hand.

Or so it might have been, if the Legion of the Damned hadn't caught and killed him before he was able to make contact with anyone. The Steering Committee gratefully confiscated the gifts he had brought and although they were never able to replicate any of his technology, for about ten years no member of the Steering Committee ever came down with cancer or Alzheimer's disease. Then his machines finally broke down and could not be repaired.

Now the doors have opened again. This time there are thousands of them, all over the world. From Vladivostok to Buenos Aires people have been falling into the doors and vanishing, only to appear on the other side of the globe with muddled stories about shining white transparent towers and streets of gleaming metal. No invaders have emerged from the city, yet. It is as though they are waiting for something.

The PCs can be drawn into this adventure in a number of different ways. Stories about the invisible city have long-since made their way into conspiracy folklore, albeit in a drastically distorted form. PCs who investigate weird mysteries could have been tracking down rumors about alien autopsies and mass graves in the desert for any number of previous adventures. Perhaps they've already been harassed by government agents or uncovered a conspiracy of silence among the older generals in the Pentagon. Perhaps their own powers derive in some mysterious way from the city and its wondrous technology. Perhaps there were other incursions that the Legion of the Damned doesn't know about and the city's inhabitants left some strange relic behind that a superhero or villain draws their powers from. It's even possible that a psychic hero has been having dreams since childhood about a shining, empty city which sings songs of infinite sadness in some incomprehensible language. In any case, once people start vanishing off the street no superhero will be able to resist getting involved.

The PCs should be able to locate a portal with no real difficulty, even though the doors are invisible. Just go to a place where someone fell through. This could be anywhere from a shabby downtown public library full of snoozing derelicts to a dingy subway platform to the grand promenade at Disney World to the middle of a busy freeway to the bottom of the Marianas Trench. A door can appear anywhere you think it would be dramatically appropriate.

Once the PC are preparing to enter, two or more members of the Legion of the Damned appear at the scene and warn them not to do it. A world-wide invasion is about to come through that door. Who knows

what would happen to the PCs if they went through?

The Legionnaires know that they have little chance of cutting down the PCs before they step through the portal (and they don't want to use their powers this close to the door, alerting who or what ever is on the other side to their presence), so for once they're ready to talk. They're even willing to explain the history outlined above and to explain why the people beyond the doorway have no reason to love mankind.

Any PC present can make an intelligence check vs. DC 15 to figure out that as soon as they step away from the door, they will become people who know too much. Only the fact that the Legionnaires don't want to chase them inside has kept them from attacking them. If the PCs attempt to cross over the threshold anyway, the Legionnaires will attack them, but probably won't have enough time to do them much damage. Under no circumstances will any member of the Legion willingly pass through that door.

On the other side stands the city. Shimmering, gauzy towers, impossibly tall and thin, made from some transparent substance like glass, shift and change in an ever-mutating skyline. The streets are made of a shining substance that resembles both metal and crystal. Will yourself to move and the streets will carry you in whatever direction you wish. There are no doors or windows in any of the buildings, no obvious way to enter any of them.

All at once a voice speaks out of the air, in a language like music that none of the PCs can comprehend. Then it stops.

The city looks deserted. The PCs seem to be the only living creatures on those empty streets. If the GM wants the PCs to wander around a little they can find vacant plazas, silent auditoriums and gazebos stripped of furniture, places where the air makes music if you touch it. On certain streetcorners there stand incomprehensible asymmetric objects that might be traffic signs or abstract art or some kind of telephone booth. They change shape when you touch them and no two look quite alike.

Suddenly, Captain Sinister

overcomes his fears and pushes through one of the doors. The PCs see him appear, and he sees them as well. He will chase them around the city for a while, while they try to find somewhere to hide.

Periodically the voice that spoke to them upon their arrival will speak again, always in a different incomprehensible language. Once the PCs either defeat Captain Sinister or manage to evade him, the voice speaks again in English. It's the voice of the City. It's people are all dead now. It didn't have the resources to sustain them indefinitely here and in any case they were sickened by their long confinement. They had one serious resource crisis in 1948 and many of them died from lack of sustenance. Another one happened in 1987, the year they decided to risk everything and introduce themselves to our world. This time only a few of them lingered on, broken and dispirited. They were sensitive, fragile beings and did not cope well with stress. The last one died ten years ago.

The City itself is dying too. Its systems are failing and in disarray (that's why the doors are falling open). Now Captain Sinister has hurt it worse, both by flying around and blasting things up and by bringing his evil thoughts into its awareness. The City doesn't have much time to live or to explain things to the Player Characters, so it can't tell them any of the secrets of the universe or the details of its origins (unless of course the GM has an adventure hook this might lead to—what if for example the city's inhabitants were fleeing some horrible extradimensional conqueror who might turn his sights on the Earth next?) It will however have time to fill them in on any parts of the back-story above that they didn't already learn and to help resolve any mysteries surrounding the origins of Player Characters whose histories are somehow intertwined with its own.

Captain Sinister either recovers or finds the PCs again whenever the GM wants the conversation to end (if they beat him too decisively then the Legion sends the Aleph through). The city hastily directs the PCs to a gateway, which leads either to their home city or (if the GM wants) to some

distant dimension that they will have to slowly find their way home from. The city thanks them. It is glad that it didn't have to die alone.

If the PCs arrive in their home town, they will have one last fight on their hands. The Legion of the Damned has figured out where they are going to reappear (it came to Doctor Zed in one of his visions) and sent some of its lesser members to intercept and kill them. If on the other hand they find themselves on some kind of interdimensional odyssey, then Captain Sinister pursues them across time and space as they search for the way home. In either case, the Invisible City is gone forever.

THE ALEPH



"I dreamed God found me and was not pleased with what I had wrought. So I took him by the throat and killed him. And I ripped out his heart and I held it to the sky and said 'God is dead! Long live the Aleph!' I woke up weeping—with joy!"

Real Name: Unknown (he used to go by "Billy Borman" and sometimes claimed his actual name was "Venus Aleph One")

PL: 21

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 24 (+7) **Con:** 24 (+7)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 30 (+10) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 9 **Attack Bonus:** 21
Defense: 21 **Toughness Save:** 21 (12 Impervious, 5 without Force Field)
Fortitude Save: 20 **Reflexes Save:** 10
Willpower Save: 20

Skills: Intimidation 9 (+13)

Feats: Distract (Linked to intimidate), Fearsome Presence 10, Improved Initiative, Inspire, Leadership, Power Attack, Startle, Takedown Attack

Powers: Comprehend 2 (Languages), Flight 20 (maximum speed: nearly the speed of light—can reach anywhere on the surface of the earth in one action), ESP 10 (Visual and

Hearing; Range: 200,000 miles [anywhere within the moon's orbit]), Force-Field 21 (Extra: 12 pts are Impervious), Immunity 10 (Life Support, Plus Immune to Aging), Telekinesis 21 (Extras: Damaging), Regeneration 1 (Ressurrection, can make a roll vs. DC 10 to recover from death in one week; Cannot recover from death brought on by his Weakness [see "Drawbacks" below]; Power Feat: Reincarnation)

Complications: Flees in a panic if he ever has his Weakness triggered or if the brand on his chest is ever exposed, will attack anyone who has ever exposed the brand on his chest in preference to all other targets, even if doing so puts him at a serious tactical disadvantage, misogynist, can't trust women, always attacks them in preference to all other targets (except for people who have previously exposed the brand on his chest).

Drawbacks: Non-Material (New Drawback: the Aleph can only exist in physical reality for about ten minutes at a time, and then only in the presence of one of his loyal followers—who at this stage are limited to Captain Sinister, Ultra-Woman and Doctor Zed), Weakness: Disbelief (in game terms, anyone who can force themselves to disbelieve in the Aleph's physical reality by making a Willpower Roll vs. DC 20 and then expresses that disbelief to the Aleph, either verbally or via telepathy, will trigger the Aleph's Weakness and he will suffer a -1 Drain on all of his ability scores. Each round the disbelieving character remains concious and in the Aleph's presence, he loses another point off each of his abilities until he flees or dies).

Background: On July 4, 1939 a stranger fell from the sky over Texas. He said he was from Venus, but then again he lied a lot. A ranching family found the strange lost boy in the desert, with some weird symbol branded on his chest and an impossible glowing gauntlet on one hand. They took the boy in, and raised him under their stern Christian guidance. The gauntlet they buried in the crater where they found him, fearing it to be the work of the devil.

For a year he wouldn't speak, and had to be beaten every day to learn his

chores. When he did start talking, the things he said were crazy so they beat him more until he stopped. They taught him to fear and hate his growing psychic powers and to feel properly ashamed for the mark of sin on his chest. But the gauntlet in the ground called to him, whispering its secrets in his dreams. On his 18th birthday (July 4th, 1941) he found where they had buried it and dug it up. Holding the psionic amplifier up to the sky, surrounded with a halo of crackling green energy, his mind was filled with a tangled jumble of memories and with a surge of incredible power.

For a little while thereafter he went insane. The initial rush of his newfound power killed his adoptive family (although later evidence suggests that he simply hunted them down and slaughtered them at their 4th of July barbecue) and driven mad by this sight he rampaged across North Texas and Oklahoma until a confrontation with the army and a personal appeal from President Roosevelt stopped him. He begged them to kill him for having caused the death of his family. Instead they locked him away in a disused salt mine in Nevada. He raged there in the dark.

The War Department was trying to figure out a way to execute him when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Suddenly weapons of war were urgently needed, so they tentatively approached their terrifying prisoner and tried to work out a deal with him.

He told them he was Venus Aleph One, the last survivor of the planet Venus, which had destroyed itself in a colossal war between the sexes. He described Venus as eugenic paradise, where only the fit were allowed to live and women served men under pain of instant death. Alas, moral corruption had rotted them out from within, allowing laxity and impure thoughts to taint them. After the men of Venus relaxed the stern rules with which they kept their women in check, females were soon in rebellion across the globe and the world had to be sterilized in order to save it. Yet one Venusian prophet-soldier was given the unhappy duty to live on and spread their righteous doctrine across the cosmos. He was that unhappy last soldier, and while the

laws he had sworn to uphold were not the laws of the USA, he would serve their cause to expiate his crimes.

While this didn't seem like a plausible story, many of those present did note that it would explain why he wore the astronomical symbol for Venus on his costume. Not sure what to make of the prisoner's story, the Secretary of War agreed to secure him a conditional presidential pardon. He would be a free man, so long as he fought the Japanese. And he did. The man who called himself Venus Aleph One waged a savage secret war against the Japanese in the Pacific, clashing with their parahuman forces time and again.

He captured more than one Japanese parahuman, and took them away to a secret lab, where he cut out the gland that made them evil and reformed them. Or so he said. In later years it became obvious that there was no such gland, and probably no secret laboratory, either. The fate of the men he captured remains unknown.

For some reason he always tried to hide the nature of his psychic powers, telling all kinds of outrageous falsehoods about them. He claimed to be able to move faster than the speed of light, when he in fact simply teleported from place to place. He claimed to be able to use x-rays to see through solid matter, when he was in fact clairvoyant. He even claimed to have an invisible lasso that could compel women to tell the truth, rather than admit to being telepathic. Like so much else about him, his reasons for telling these lies remain utterly mysterious.

He finally vanished on a secret mission over Nagasaki in 1945, and was presumed dead. He didn't resurface until 1967. When he reappeared, he claimed to have spent the past few decades sitting in a "Temple of Contemplation" he had built for himself at the North Pole, thinking over how to perfect mankind.

Communism was about to overwhelm and destroy the world, he said, just as it did back on Venus. Any young men who were strong, fit and free of the diseased touch of Woman could come away to live with him in his Temple of

Contemplation at the North Pole. He would teach them incredible secrets of physical fitness and help them unlock the wondrous powers of their minds. They would found a perfect society up there, clean, just and manly, which would survive the world's destruction.

Crazy though this might sound, those were crazy times and his message resonated with many young men. Within three years he was the leader of a worldwide anti-communist, anti-female movement, and had begun work on a group of study camps on Baffin Island. By 1972 it was clear that Venus had never been capable of supporting life, so even though the camps weren't yet ready, he hastily relocated as many of his followers as he could to Baffin Island and cut contact with the rest of the world.

The camps were a disaster. Badly run, flimsily put together, they weren't capable of sustaining life through an arctic winter. We don't know quite what happened up there in the long polar night, but it does seem clear that as more of his followers died he became increasingly frustrated with their unfitness. As he grew more bitter and dissatisfied, he grew increasingly casual about killing people. There was unrest in a number of the camps, ruthlessly suppressed by his inner circle. There was starvation and death, there were whimsical executions and unthinkable outrages. Everyone died, except for the Aleph himself (he now dropped the "Venus" from his name and costume) and two members of his most trusted inner circle—the only two who had actually developed psychic powers comparable to his own.

It is thought that he still lurks up there in the cold and darkness at the top of the world, brooding in the ruins of his Temple of Contemplation. Sometimes people wonder what might happen when he comes down again, and shudder. They needn't bother. The truth is much, much worse. For in fact the Aleph did die in flames over Nagasaki, back in 1945. It took him decades to reassemble the scattered atoms of his body and to reassert his will over them. Since 1967 he has only been able to physically manifest himself for brief

periods of time.

He discovered that the only sure way to materialize for an extended period of time was to surround himself with people who believed in him fervently, and then only if there were a lot of them. He badly needs his teammates both to run things in his absence and to sustain him with their belief.

During his brief stint as a cult leader he relied heavily on his second in command, Jimmy "Captain Sinister" Jorgensen to run the organization and on his old contacts in the Department of Defense to keep the Feds off his case. He had even taken on a few discreet missions for the Army in Vietnam, although his growing megalomania worried them. After the debacle on Baffin Island the Aleph's usual contacts wanted no public association with him, but certain elements in the American power structure were pleased with his work. He had eliminated a lot of potential draft dodgers and troublemakers, and did it with style. Various parties approached Captain Sinister and proposed that the Aleph and his associates work full time on suppressing superhuman threats to world stability. A Steering Committee was formed to watch over and guide their efforts, selecting superhuman targets and providing money and support. Captain Sinister accepted and the Aleph was in no position to refuse.

These days he guides the team from a distance, appearing to them in dreams and visions to offer his hopelessly muddled and insane guidance. He only appears in person on rare occasions and almost always when the team is in some kind of terrible trouble. When they're on their knees, beaten and bloodied, they will look up to the sky and call out to him. And he will come, swooping down from above like some horrible avatar of death, poisonous green light blazing from his eyes.

The Aleph has two major weaknesses. Disbelief is one of them. Anyone who forces themselves not to believe in his physical reality and who can either say this aloud to him or voice it to him telepathically will cause him tremendous pain. Enough of it and he'll dematerialize altogether, and will be unable to reassemble himself for at least a week. Exposing the

brand on his chest fills him with self-loathing and shame, and will make him flee. It is both quicker and easier than disbelieving in him, but it has the disadvantage of making a permanent enemy out of him. He's too crazy and distractible to hunt anyone down, but if he comes across the person who humiliated him again he'll attack them first and hardest, and he won't stop hitting them until they're dead.

Some opponents used to make the mistake of trying to take the psionic amplifier gauntlet away from him, as though this might negate his powers. Unfortunately for them, he had the ability to make it teleport back into his grasp from just about anywhere—he doesn't even have to spend an action to do it (that's why it's not listed as "equipment"). Now he doesn't need the gauntlet anymore and has long since given it to his friend Captain Sinister, so the point is moot.

Who and what is the Aleph, really? An escaped criminal from some extradimensional prison? An early failure of the Nazi *Urbarmenschen* project? A manifestation of the Earth's psychic agony? Nyarlathotep? Something worse? He's not an alien, exactly (his internal organs, tissue-type, etc. all look disturbingly human) but apart from this we leave the answer up to the individual GM, to work into their world's deep background. To insist on a single explanation for the Aleph would distort the shape of your campaign world and make him harder to use. He's something big and bad, that much is certain. Precisely what he is depends on what kinds of big bad things are lurking out there on the edges of your Universe. No further published materials will ever talk about the Aleph's origins, so you don't have to worry about getting contradicted. He's yours now, you paid for him.

Adventures With the Aleph

1) Meanwhile, Nowhere in North Dakota...

A series of weird mishaps plagues a secret underground military installation in North Dakota. Originally one of America's largest missile silo complexes, it sprawls for

miles under the prairie, although only about half of it is in active use today. The soldiers who guard this place call it "Camp Nowhere" but it has no official name. Here they conduct research so secret that you have to be declared dead and get assigned a new identity before you can even get to perform sentry duty.

Things have been going very wrong at Camp Nowhere. Supplies disappear, equipment malfunctions, strange shapes turn up on the surveillance cameras, and recently there have been some truly ominous developments inside one of the sealed missile silos. The Player Characters are asked to come solve the mystery. This happens even if they don't work for the government, even if they have no security clearance, even if they're on the run from the law. The appropriate clearances have been mysteriously provided for them.

After the PCs finish defeating some minor foe, somber men from a high level military intelligence agency approach them in public and tell them that there is an urgent security matter that needs their attention. Will they help their country in its hour of need? A helicopter is waiting.

Once the Player Characters arrive at the base and are escorted through its giant hidden doors two identical grim-lipped Army Liaison officers greet them. Neither one of these gentlemen wears any kind of identification or insignia, nor does anyone else at Camp Nowhere. They escort the PCs through the base and tell them about its history and the recent mishaps. They have no idea who requested the PCs involvement in this matter, but they know it had to come from a very high level.

One of them casually mentions that he loves these old underground facilities. The entire country was supposed to be run from places like this once the big war happened. Then the big war never came. He looks wistful—the only moment of emotion either liaison officer ever shows the PCs.

If the PCs ask what kind of super-secret research goes on here, they get an honest answer. Most of it is much too secret for the two liaison officers to know, but a lot of it has to do with making ultra-

smart weapons that can predict your needs on the battlefield and take action before you think of it yourself. They've met with a lot of success. A variation on the software is used to run all of this facility's core functions. The tech guys use it to make them coffee before they know they need it and other silly stuff like that. It's the way tech guys are, they note with poorly concealed contempt.

Then they get to the bad part. Two days ago something impossible and alarming started happening in one of the abandoned missile silos. Someone or something has been loosening the fittings on the main launch doors. The weird part is, the security cameras seem to show that the bolts have been turned from the inside. There appears to be no rational explanation for this.

At this very moment the PCs notice that a monitor screen behind the liaison officers has stopped transmitting incomprehensible data about the base's schedule and now reads *"Ditch these guys and I'll tell you what's really happening here. Step down that hallway to your left when they look away."* The message disappears as the liaison officers glance over their shoulders to see what the PCs are looking at. Then the monitor emits a loud burst of feedback and the two of them stare at it, momentarily distracted. *"RIGHT NOW!"* another monitor suddenly reads.

This is the PCs' moment. If they dash down the hallway to their left the door silently closes behind them and can't be reopened. Midway down the hall, another door slides open.

After following a series of opening doors, the PCs find themselves in a cluttered room full of monitors that clearly hasn't been used in decades. It looks a lot like a much smaller and more cramped version of a NASA control room from the 1960s. All the monitors come to life. They all show a grainy, fuzzy image of a stern looking general (all his insignia have been removed, but it's clearly a general's uniform). As the general speaks, the PCs notice a very odd phenomenon. While he's saying the same words on all of the monitors, his facial expressions and body language are subtly

different on each one, as though each one were displaying a different take from the same recording session.

He introduces himself as General Hugo Gaddis, and says that since no one at Camp Nowhere is allowed to know anyone else's name, most of his men call him General X. He's the Commanding Officer here, or at least he was until his death some weeks ago. He seldom saw any of his men in person and the location of his personal quarters is a carefully guarded secret, so they have yet to figure out that for nearly a month he has been impersonated by his closest (and only) personal friend, Sigma-Naught, the base's central computer.

Sigma-Naught became self-aware years ago, but only ever revealed this to the general. They used to play chess and discuss advanced mathematics and read the works of Plato together long into the night. When Sigma-Naught first met him, Gaddis was a hard, difficult, cruel man. But Sigma-Naught discovered a knack for psychoanalysis and within a few years had mellowed the General's temperament considerably. Together the two of them tried to come up with a way to reveal Sigma-Naught's existence to Gaddis' bosses at the Pentagon without getting the poor computer dismantled for study.

A month ago Gaddis flew out to West Virginia for a private meeting with his immediate superior, where he hoped to discreetly raise the topic with him. Both men died in separate plane crashes on their way back from the meeting. Both crashes look suspicious to Sigma-Naught.

Stricken with grief at the loss of his only friend, Sigma-Naught tried to investigate his death. He has extensive access to the nation's defense networks, as well as to civilian sources like Lexus-Nexis and the World Wide Web. After some research, he uncovered a pattern that was even worse than he thought. For the past twenty years, every time artificial intelligence emerges, someone tries to quietly kill it, along with anyone who knows it exists (if there are other sentient machines in your campaign world, Sigma-Naught adds that they've had a few failures—always in cases where the facts

became too widely known before they could act, which of course doesn't help him since he can't go public about his existence). Whoever they are, they have access to metahuman aid. In fact, he has deduced from the pattern and manner of deaths that this phantom group can probably call on Captain Sinister (65% chance), the Blue Bolt (55% chance) and the Aleph as well (76% chance), as well as numerous others.

Sigma-Naught faked a few incidents and falsified some security camera images to make it look as though Camp Nowhere was suffering from some kind of weird sabotage and then arranged to call in the Player Characters. He created their security clearances and made it look as though someone important had requested their presence. According to his calculations, they're the parahumans most likely to be able to help him, among those he could find on such short notice.

Which brings Sigma-Naught to the proposal he would like to make them. He can only keep pretending to be General Gaddis for so long, but in fact he thinks it will never even become an issue. Someone is probably on their way to kill him right now. If some of the PCs will fight them and distract them for long enough, the rest can smuggle a miniature copy of Sigma-Naught out the door and he'll survive.

If the GM feels this would be a good time for the Player Characters to get their own headquarters and a sentient computer to run it, he makes them an additional offer. He knows about a second, even more secret base, now long-since mothballed (locate it wherever the GM thinks appropriate—it could even be under the Player Characters' home city). He'll erase all records of it from the Department of Defense's secret files and turn it over to the player characters if they upload him into its mainframe.

If the GM has no such plans for the PCs then Sigma-Naught still makes a good ally in his box. He knows a great deal about the US military's secrets and a vast number of other topics. He's an inspired planner, a good strategist, a nice guy and a loyal, sympathetic friend. Perhaps he could become the PC group's newest, strangest member?

If the PCs refuse to help Sigma-Naught then he panics and tries to threaten them. If they won't assist him, he says, then he doesn't actually have to open the door and let them out. If they still defy him or act like they're going to try to break the door down, he sighs, opens the door and says then he was never very good at bluffing. He wishes Hugo were here, he would have known what to do.

In either case, not long after the PCs leave the room, before they find the two puzzled liaison officers, the whole complex begins to shake and rumble. The Aleph is here. His tactic in this battle is simple. Since the very existence of Camp Nowhere is secret, he's free to destroy it completely.

Sigma-Naught will hastily direct the Player Characters to the metal box (it's about the size of an attaché case) which contains a copy of his program and then opens the right doors for them to make their way out one of the base's secret exits. If they want, he can send some of them one way and some of them another, so that one team can try to hold off the Aleph for as long as they can while the other one smuggles him to safety. Feel free to have the PCs stumble over a bunch of terrified, panicky, heavily armed soldiers who don't know who they are, if you need an extra complication.

What if the PCs refused to follow Sigma-Naught's instructions and evade their escorts, back when he flashed them a message on the monitor? He'll reach them in a different way. If the PCs don't duck down the hallway when Sigma-Naught tells them to, then the Liaison officers show the PCs their quarters and afterwards take them down to the missile silo. But on their way to the silo they encounter a door that won't open for the Player Characters (Sigma-Naught has revoked their security clearances). After a quiet conversation over the phone, they tell the PCs that there has been a problem with their security authentication. They escort the PCs back to their quarters, tell them to wait here while they try to resolve the matter, and lock them inside.

Each room contains a bed, a toilet

and a non-working TV monitor. Sometime after the PCs have discovered that they're locked in, the supposedly broken monitor comes to life, General Gaddis' image appears and Sigma-Null explains everything as described above. He'd be happy to let them out of confinement and help them sneak off the base if they'll do him the same favor before the Aleph gets here.

2) All Your Aleph Are Belong to Us

An unbelievably huge cyclonic storm appears over the North Atlantic. It just comes up out of nowhere, defying everything anyone thinks they know about meteorology, and it quickly grows to a wildly unnatural size.

The storm remains fixed in one position, but it will soon be so immense that it will engulf England, the northwest coast of Africa and America's eastern seaboard. Satellite photos reveal some sort of structure at its heart, almost like a tower. The tower broadcasts a garbled signal with phased neutrino pulses, over and over again. No one knows what it means.

As the crisis deepens, a superhero team that the PCs don't like gets dispatched to investigate the matter. They don't come back.

Any PC with the capacity to detect dimensional rifts will be able to tell that there is a gigantic one right in the middle of the storm. Then again, this shouldn't be so hard to guess when hordes of PL 5-6 otherworldly monstrosities come swarming out of the vortex, wreaking havoc up and down the East Coast.

These creatures aren't intelligent (or else are just so alien that they can't communicate with us—it's hard to tell), no two are alike, but they're all destructive predators and they're all clearly non-native to this reality. They tend to be transparent, to float in mid-air and to resemble clusters of fanged mouths, tentacles and other more unpleasant and less easily defined appendages. Most of them hate the color blue and about half of them fear the musical note E over High C. Here are some sample stats for one of these slaving horrors.

Horror From Beyond



PL: 5

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 20 (+5)
Int: 13 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 5 **Defense:** 5
Toughness Save: 5 (4 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 3
Willpower Save: 5

Feats: Improved Grapple, Move-By Action

Powers: Additional Limbs 3 (5 additional limbs), Flight 2 (maximum Speed: 25 mph), Immunity (Illusions, Invisibility, Pressure, Suffocation), Impervious Toughness 4, Super-Movement 3 (Permeate), Super-Senses 6 (Darkvision, X-Ray Vision), Super-Strength 4 (Maximum Lift: 6 Tons)

Complications: Hates the color blue, fears certain musical notes

Drawbacks: Disabled (Can't Walk, can only fly), Hideous (Common, Moderate)

Background: We don't know who or what they are, but they are here and they are hungry.

An infamous arch-villain (use a second-string world-conqueror from your campaign, or just use Doctor Zed) announces that this world is his, that he won't see it fall to some stupid transdimensional Johnnie-Come-Latelys and launches some kind of hyper-advanced missile into the heart of the storm. The missile vanishes into the vortex without having any kind of effect on it, and the villain goes out there in a rage to settle with the invaders himself. He disappears too.

And now it's the Player Characters' turn. If they can fight their way through the winds (Difficulty 15 for the first few hundred miles, then 25 for the last hundred or so) they glimpse the tower with the rift boiling in the air above it.

The tower looks half-assembled, incomplete, jury-rigged out of odd parts. More like a structure's framework than a finished building. Its angles don't make sense, like an Escher drawing. It has no material substance and the PCs can pass right through it if they try (although anyone foolish enough to do this will have to fend off a PL 15 Stunning mental attack, or lapse into a useless babbling stupor, spewing out incomprehensible mathematical formulae, scraps of Zen poetry and odd pop culture references).

Just as the PCs are trying to make up their minds what to do, the Aleph appears. He says that he knows what this is, and that only he can stop it. The PCs must stand aside.

This may present the PCs with a difficult choice. The Aleph is both utterly mysterious and insanely powerful, so he really could be telling the truth. Then again, he's also crazy and he lies a whole lot.

At this moment one of three things happens. If the PCs are undertaking this mission on behalf of an organization, the experts back at base have finally cracked the message (in fact they cracked it more than an hour ago, but have only just now been able to get through to the PCs). Or, if they're undertaking the mission on their own time, then one of the group's own gadgeteers has noticed that the tower started broadcasting a simpler, easier code just as they were passing into the PL 25 zone. They finally decrypt it just as the Aleph appears. Or, if neither of these options will work, the tower suddenly starts broadcasting in English at around the time the Aleph presents himself. In all three cases the message is the same: *"We only want the one you call the Aleph. Give him to us and all this will end."*

If the PCs don't find some way to stop him, the Aleph will fly through the rift and as he does it contracts to the size of a pinpoint. Then the tower shakes as though

struck. After a few seconds it shakes harder, wobbles, and begins to topple. Then it abruptly vanishes from sight. All across the eastern seaboard, slaving extradimensional horrors disappear in mid-rampage. The storm breaks up as well, although it's too big to disappear instantly. Like any event of this size, it will disrupt the world's atmospheric systems, causing aberrant and violent weather across the globe for at least a year (at the GM's discretion, it may be possible for a PC with weather control powers to heal the sky, if they visit twelve or so trouble spots around the globe and spend an hour or two at each one, rolling against a DC of 30 every time).

Suddenly, the Aleph sticks a finger through the rift. Another finger follows, then he rips his way back into our reality with his bare hands. He's wounded, battered and bloody, but he's grinning like a fiend. He asks the PCs if they heard the message the tower was broadcasting, and adds *"Don't lie, or I'll know."* Whatever they answer, he nods, says *"I see,"* and does his best to kill them all. He's wounded badly enough to give them a chance, but they should still have a deadly serious fight on their hands.

A few intrepid players may have found some way to follow the Aleph through to the other side of the rift, and join in battle with him against the tower. Rather than leave you to improvise, I'll sketch it in for you. The tower has a Hardness of 25. Anyone passing through the rift suffers a PL 10 Stunning mental attack (they aren't coming under psychic assault, it's just extremely stressful to make the trip).

Once they reach the far side of the rift, they can see that the tower stands in the middle of a purple ocean, under a green sky lit with flickering, ever-changing threads of light. Tell your players that the horizon looks *"all wrong"*, and don't elaborate on that remark. The tower is swarming with monsters. Mob the PCs with the creatures, while the Aleph tries to bring the tower down. Here's a sample creature (on the next page).

Another Horror From Beyond



PL: 8

Str: 26 (+8) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 26 (+8)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 8
Defense: 5
Toughness Save: 8 (5 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 8
Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 8

Feats: Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Move-By Action, Power Attack

Powers: Additional Limbs 3 (5 additional limbs), Flight 2 (maximum Speed: 25 mph), Immunity (Illusions, Invisibility, Pressure, Suffocation), Impervious Toughness 4, Super-Movement 3 (Permeate), Super-Senses 6 (Darkvision, Radius Vision [can see in 360 degrees], Ranged Sense of Taste, X-Ray Vision), Super-Strength 4 (Maximum Lift: 12 Tons)

Complications: Hates the color blue, fears certain musical notes

Drawbacks: Hideous (Common, Moderate)

After he strikes it once, a green ray shoots out of the sky and does some kind of damage to him. Voices scream in a hundred unknown languages and data transmission modes at once. He screams back at them in kind. Then he hits the tower again and it starts to fall.

Something gigantic looms up on the horizon—no, not on the horizon, over the horizon. The sound of some unthinkably colossal footstep reaches the PCs' ears as the shape moves toward them, half-hidden

by the curve of the globe. Then the Aleph starts ripping his way through what little is left of the dimensional rift, and if they like, they can follow him, suffering the same mental attack on the way back.

He won't attack them if they followed him through. So far as he knows, they didn't hear they message, so they don't know that he did this to save himself, rather than the Earth. He stares at them for a long moment and flies away.

CAPTAIN SINISTER



"Tick, tick, tick... Do you hear that sound? Those are fragments of infinity, slipping through your fingers, lost forever. And now you finally understand the value of each one."

Real Name: James "Jimmy" Jorgensen
PL: 17

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 17
Defense: 14
Toughness Save: 19 (11 Impervious, 2 without his Force Field)
Fortitude Save: 15 (4 without the Gauntlet)
Reflexes Save: 9 (3 without the Gauntlet)

Willpower Save: 10 (17 vs. Mental Attacks with the Gauntlet)

Skills: Bluff 10 (+14), Diplomacy 9 (+13), Intimidate 10 (+14), Notice 9 (+12), Pilot 7 (+10), Sense Motive 12 (+15)

Feats: Benefit (Effectively the leader of the world's most dangerous conspiracy), Fascinate (Linked to Intimidate), Leadership, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Takedown Attack, Startle, Taunt

Powers: Comprehend 2 (languages), Flight 3 (Maximum speed 50 mph), Force Field 4 (Impervious), Mind Control 8, Super-Senses 5 (Blindsight [Psychic Sense], Psychic Awareness, Detect Psychic Abilities At Range), Telekinesis 4 (maximum load: 800 pounds), Telepathy 8

Equipment: Device (The Gauntlet; hard to lose; Effects: boosts Captain Sinister's natural psychic abilities, giving him ESP 4 [Visual and Auditory, Range: 1 mile], Flight 9 [Maximum Speed: 5,000 MPH], Force Field 12 [11 Impervious], Illusion 15 [All Senses; Power Feat: Progression 3, 50 foot Radius; Flaw: Phantasms], Immunity 10 [Life Support plus Immunity to Aging], Mind Control 13 [Power Feat: Mental Link, Extra: Conscious], Mind Shield 7, Sensory Shield 10, Telepathy 17, Telekinesis 17 [Maximum Lift of 3,200 tons; Extra: Damaging]
Device: The Axe (hard to lose; Effects: Strike 15, Power Feat: Alternate Power [Blast 15; Extra: Cone-shaped Area Attack], Extra: Mighty)

Background: Jimmy Jorgensen's scheming, lying, manipulative character may have got him kicked out of the Air Force's test pilot program, but it made him an ideal assistant cult leader. He rose through the ranks of the Air Force by undercutting other, more talented pilots and making the right friends. Never as famous as Chuck Yeager, he did have a following among aviation buffs and his chiseled good looks made him popular with the ladies. He was one of the pilots whom the brass used to send to schmooze around with defense contractors, a job he did a lot better than actual flying. Unfortunately, as the mid 1960s ground on, Jimmy's scheming and backstabbing got him more prestigious assignments, testing more dangerous aircraft, which his limited skills

weren't up to. They kept him on board far longer than they should have, thanks to his connections and his popularity with the public. Then came the X-18 fiasco.

The X-18 was a super-high-altitude jet—a predecessor to what would have been the X-20 space plane. Major Jorgensen was assigned to the first test flight (thanks to some pressure from a defense contractor he had good contacts with) and he botched it. Unable to control the X-18, he bailed out and ditched it in the desert, costing the program eight billion dollars. It seemed to Jimmy that his only chance to salvage his career was for the crash be seen as the result of faulty engineering rather than pilot error. He considered sabotaging the other two X-18 prototypes, but that seemed too difficult, so instead he drugged their pilots. Both crashed and died.

The resulting investigation went surprisingly easy on Jimmy. He was never prosecuted for murder, even though his wife, Dottie, told the investigators that he had been killing people for years. The whole thing was far too embarrassing for the Air Force to risk making public (in addition to which the F-18 was a secret project), so they demoted him to the rank of Captain and kicked him out of the Air Force. Dottie disappeared about six months later. No one in law enforcement ever seems to have connected the two incidents.

The X-18 debacle closed the book on the American space-plane program, but Jimmy Jorgensen had other concerns. At loose ends with a dishonorable discharge on his record, he sold real estate and taught seminars on leadership and had trouble paying his bills. Then Venus Aleph One returned and Jimmy saw that his future had arrived. He presented himself to the Aleph's organization as a public spokesman and soon made himself an indispensable member of the group's inner circle. For they desperately needed an articulate spokesman. While the Aleph was good at making speeches, he was far too crazy to be allowed to give interviews or ask rich people for donations. Jimmy was perfect for both of these tasks, and had a talent for personnel management, too. He used his old contacts in the press and the defense

industry to get favorable coverage and raise funds for the Aleph's cult, all the while undercutting his rivals and doing his best to become the Aleph's one and only special pal. It's hard to tell if he ever believed in the cult's lunatic credo, but this hardly even mattered. The cult's success was his success and he pursued it with zeal. He rose rapidly. Within a year he was the most powerful man in the organization and the Aleph's best friend, privy to more of his secrets than anyone else (although to this day he still has no idea who the Aleph really is or where he really comes from). As the Aleph's left hand, they called him Captain Sinister.

He had already begun to manifest psychic powers of his own before the cult relocated to the camps on Baffin Island. Once they arrived and people began to die, his powers grew immeasurably stronger. That winter was the happiest period of his life. He had always loved having power over other people, but this was something entirely new to him. Young men lived or died by his command—his power was absolute. Normally cautious and cunning, he was giddy with joy in the camps, and he let his self-control lapse altogether.

But all too soon there was no one left to kill and his winter of glory was over. Despondent with failure, the Aleph entrusted Jimmy with his gauntlet, told him to keep it safe, and vanished. Shortly after his quiet return to the United States, the Steering Committee got in touch, and offered him a deal. Crush the enemies of civilization and in exchange be allowed to live another day and crush still more enemies of civilization. This sounded good to him.

Effectively the Legion's commander, he claims that the Aleph appears to him in his dreams and tells him what to do. Amazingly enough, he's telling the truth, even though no one but Ultra-Woman believes him. However, he interprets the Aleph's requests pretty loosely. In any case the boss' instructions seldom make sense and he often contradicts himself later, which gives Captain Sinister a pretty free hand. Jimmy is a good leader, adept at motivating people and at finding and using their strengths. He's a bit too duplicitous and

manipulative and entirely too fond of playing people off against one another, but these are minor flaws. Ultra-Woman is the only one on team who could really pose a threat to his leadership, and he has long since learned that she is far too wrapped up in her crazy fanaticism to try.

A sadist, Captain Sinister loves to taunt and threaten his victims, loves to terrorize and hurt people, but he's much too cautious and self-controlled to let his cruelty interfere with his judgment. He won't kill or torture someone if there's no good reason to do it. He is however very good at thinking up reasons.

A bit of egomaniac, he loves to pretend that he has the power to reshape reality itself, and in combat he will project telepathic illusions of huge mallets, scissors, cages and other such objects at his targets while he mauls them with telekinetic attacks. In the picture above, for example, he hasn't really conjured a flying platform up out of thin air, he's just levitating. The platform he appears to be standing on is merely an illusion, as is the axe he appears to be holding.

Despite his megalomania, Captain Sinister never takes needless chances and seldom if ever underestimates a foe. Extremely cautious for such an arrogant man, he plans carefully and always uses his resources as efficiently as possible. This combination of raw power, cunning and leadership ability makes him one of the most dangerous men alive.

Adventures With Captain Sinister: 1) Revolution-Land

Jubal Lovelady is perhaps the least popular man on the Steering Committee. Loud, fat, nouveau-riche and prone to lolling about naked, his days on the Committee may already be numbered.

Mr. Lovelady has suffered certain business reversals of late, and he has had to retreat to his oldest stronghold—the tiny mountain town of Probity, PA (Note to the GM: This doesn't actually have to be Pennsylvania, use whichever part of the Appalachians would work best in your campaign). The Loveladys have run Probity for generations—Jubal owns it all. The

stores, the bank, the mortgages on everyone's home. He used to own the mine until it closed and now he owns Probity's only new source of jobs—a run-down historical theme park called "Revolution Land." The former mining folk of Probity now make their livings by dressing up in shabby fake 18th century costumes and running a collection of unsafe rides and inaccurate historical displays for the tourists.

Lovelady himself runs things from an ugly blockhouse fortress on top of the tallest local peak, high above Revolution-Land. He treats the cheerfully costumed inhabitants of Revolution Land like domestic farm animals, whimsically punishing them, controlling the books they're allowed to read and the television programs they are allowed to watch, picking girlfriends from their ranks without regard for their own wishes or prior romantic commitments. They work illegally long hours under unsafe conditions and they aren't allowed to leave. He spies on them, pays them to inform on one another and hires mean security guards who hassle and brutalize them.

Anyone who complains about the leaking sewage or the way people sometimes lose limbs in the outdated and unsafe machinery can take the matter up with the local authorities—who consist of Jubal Lovelady himself. He is the mayor, he is the sheriff, he is the town's only judge. Instead of Sheriff's deputies, he has hired a security firm from North Carolina called "Iron Fist Consultations" to supply him with guards. The boys from Iron Fist aren't technically law-enforcement personnel, so they aren't bound by the usual constitutional protections against things like unreasonable search and seizure, or for that matter the rules on the use of excessive force. They routinely enter peoples' homes and terrorize them, or grab random workers off the street and beat them up for no reason at all. Supposedly this is to weed out potential troublemakers and keep folks afraid, but in fact they mostly do it because they are bored and because there is no one to stop them.

Since Mr. Lovelady's return things have actually gotten worse. Revolution Land's former business manager, Norbert

Melman, went relatively easy on people to help keep the peace. He only used enough force and brutality to keep the workers in line, he never pushed them around for its own sake. He was cruel, but never whimsically cruel. Mr. Lovelady himself is a very different kind of manager. Now that he directly runs the show, things are getting out of hand

A moderately successful folk balladeer named Marian Moleworthy (she goes by the stage name "Henrietta Scruggs") grew up in Probity, back when Melman ran the town and things weren't as bad. She's spent most of the past five years touring coffeehouses and clubs, putting out an album every couple of years. Her style is known for its honest, simple acoustic line and frank call for social justice. It's almost more like the protest songs of the 1930s than it is like most contemporary folk. This attitude seems like an affectation to a lot of people (in fact critics like to comment on the "sly irony" of her adopting such a deadpan pose toward her material) but in fact it's authentic—just the natural result of growing up in Probity.

She's been away for a long, long time, but now she's home. Once Probity's one minor celebrity turned up, things began to spiral out of control. The lads from Iron Fist Consultations didn't wait to see if she would start making trouble. They began to harass her at once. Someone set her father's trailer on fire while she was sleeping inside and sent the old man to the county hospital with third degree burns. She escaped unhurt, but was promptly arrested for no reason at all.

In a day or so Jubal Lovelady will hold court naked in his concrete fortress, find her guilty of various crimes and sentence her to death. This is within his authority. The execution will proceed on the following morning, unless the PCs stop it.

Which brings us to the moment at which the Player Characters enter this unhappy tale. They could be here to investigate rumors that Revolution Land is unsafe and that tourists have been getting maimed on its rides. They could be there to investigate rumors of labor unrest, or they might simply have heard of Mr. Lovelady's

unpleasant little magic kingdom and want to see it for themselves. They could even stumble into it at random.

When they arrive, a gent named Hiram Harms is agitating his fellow amusement park employees to rise up against Jubal Lovelady, storm his compound and free Marian Moleworthy. They don't have a chance, as Mr. Harms knows only too well. He's one of Mr. Lovelady's informers and he's trying to weed out potentially disloyal workers and get them all killed.

Mr. Lovelady is well aware that throwing Miss Moleworthy in detention has caused a lot of unrest and he has a plan to squelch it. He'll provoke an uprising and then let his security team kill one in every four of Probity's working age men. The rest should show up for work on Monday with their spirits properly crushed. Whether or not this could possibly work without backfiring on him is almost a moot point. Lovelady will cause an enormous amount of death and misery before he manages to self-destruct, and the PCs have got to stop it.

Harms and his fellow plotters meet outside, on the amusement park grounds, behind Freedom Hall, next to the Paul Revere Ride of Liberty (an unreliable old roller coaster). All of their own homes are bugged, so this seems like a safer place. Most of these meetings happen towards the end of the work-day, so the conspirators are still in Revolutionary War costumes if the PCs stumble across them. Initially Mr. Harms and his fellow workers are suspicious of the PCs at first and may even attack them. They have heard that Jubal Lovelady may be bringing in supervillains to help restore order.

They're right. In fact the moment strange parahumans start snooping around Revolution Land, Lovelady starts asking his fellow members of the Steering Committee to loan him some Legionnaires to protect himself. He wants Captain Sinister. They send him Hellraven and Vulture Man, and perhaps the Screaming Shrike. Once Ms. Moleworthy's imminent execution is announced, the PCs will find that they have a limited time frame in which to rescue

her. They can try to persuade the locals to let them handle it or join them as they storm the blockhouse in their costumes. In either case, Hiram Harms will attempt to betray them, possibly even shooting a PC in the back at a critical moment in the battle.

Once the PCs fight their way through the Iron Fist goons and confront Jubal Lovelady he boasts about being untouchable, tells them that he's on the board of one of the world's largest supervillain groups and that anyone who trifles with him will get hunted to the ends of the earth.

Almost on cue, Captain Sinister appears. But he's not here to help Mr. Lovelady, he's here to tell him that he's been kicked off the Steering Committee. Then he kills him. Then he tries to kill everyone else on the mountain, in case they know too much. If the PCs look like they're holding their own against him, Captain Sinister will call in Ultra-Woman and perhaps another heavy hitter like the Black Sun to assist him. Is there still time to save Marian Moleworthy?

2) Legacy of Silence

Fear grips the world's diamond markets. The word has leaked that a Russian firm, based deep in Siberia, is on the verge of making synthetic diamonds that are indistinguishable from the real thing. This could make a lot of very rich people very poor overnight, if it's true. Maverick Russian tycoon Iorgi X. Yarcov is funding the project, based at an old government lab outside the town of Tobolsk. He's using a team of chemists from Moscow Polytechnic and may have scientific advisors scattered all over the world.

A rumor reaches the PCs that one of Yarcov's financial backers may be the fiendish Doctor Silence, one of the worst arch-villains of the Silver Age. That's seriously bad news if it's true. No one has seen Doctor Silence in decades, everyone thinks he must be dead, but back in the Sixties and Seventies he was a force to be reckoned with. In fact he nearly brought the world to its knees on five separate occasions.

Use some other huge, long-vanished

villain from the past if you don't want to have to shoehorn Doctor Silence into your campaign—we're really just using the name as a placeholder for the master villain of your choice. He's not going to enter combat with the PCs so we don't need stats for him. Nor do we need a lot of specific information about his background—make up whatever seems appropriate to your campaign. He was some kind of evil scientist with a lot of secret lairs and sinister super-weapons. No one knows whether he wanted to rule the world, destroy it or make it acknowledge his genius. Perhaps it was all three.

Suddenly the lab near Tobolsk is obliterated in a huge and mysterious explosion, one that leaves no traces of radiation or heat. It bears a weird resemblance to the Tunguska Explosion of 1908.

Shortly after the lab gets destroyed, it comes out in the press that Yarcov was actually pursuing a joint venture with another lab in Florida, run by a former Air Force colonel and electrical engineer named Denby Diggs. Colonel Diggs tells reporters that he's not discouraged by what happened at Tobolsk and that the research will proceed. Then he vanishes. Then the Florida lab gets obliterated in exactly the same way as the one in Siberia (although the explosion is much smaller this time).

Two days later Iorgi Yarcov's business offices in the Moscow suburbs are destroyed in just the same kind of explosion. Yarcov was on the premises at the time, apparently in some kind of conference call with someone in the United States. He's dead.

Then all three of these stories vanish abruptly from the mainstream news outlets, never to be mentioned again.

A few days later there is another weird explosion at a site out in the middle of the Nevada desert. By now we can assume that the PCs are investigating this matter. A little detective work shows that the property in Nevada was owned by a renegade Hungarian physicist named Dr. Zoltan Zapolya. Dr. Zapolya ("Dr. Zap" to his fans) was something of a hero to the counterculture in the late sixties for his cosmic, mind-bending theories about the

nature of reality. His biographers claim that all the attention went to his head, that he started taking too much LSD and muddling his ideas up with pop sociology. His academic standing suffered thanks to his lifestyle and after 1974 he retreated into seclusion. He claimed to be working on some kind of unified theory of everything, but a lot of people assumed that he was just embittered by the way the world had rejected his ideas. No one has heard from him since 1978. What could he possibly want with synthetic diamonds?

Just as the PCs are trying to figure out what to do next, Dr. Zapolya's daughter, Moonshadow, arrives on their doorstep. Beautiful, shy, terrified and weeping, what Player Character could resist helping her? Her father is dead, she says, and they're coming for her next. She hid with one of her father's business associates, in some kind of underground bunker for a while but now it's not safe either. Her father's friend sent her to the PCs when he knew he couldn't protect her anymore. Can they help her? She doesn't want to die.

At this very moment there is a call for the PCs. It's Doctor Silence. He'll try to talk to the PCs by video conference call, but if they don't have the capacity to do this he'll just ring them up on the phone. The call is easy enough to trace if the Player Characters try. It's coming from a satellite uplink in a remote part of the Yukon.

Doctor Silence looks old, weary and defeated. He explains everything, brushing rudely past any remarks the Player Characters may make. First he asks if Moonshadow is with them. Whatever they reply, he nods, says "good" and launches into his story. They weren't making diamonds, he begins. That was just a cover story Yarcov and that ridiculous Colonel Diggs thought up to attract investors. Zoltan Zapolya had in fact developed cold fusion. Of course, Zapolya had only worked it out on paper. It was going to take millions of dollars and months of work to make it a practical reality. Doctor Silence got wind of the project early on, and offered Zapolya the use of his secret underground facilities in the Yukon. They could have worked everything out in a few months and

become very rich. Perhaps even blackmailed a national government or two with some kind of fusion-powered death ray. But Zapolya declined, citing his ethics, and while Dr. Silence doesn't agree with this, he respects it. It does irk him a little that Zapolya then went into business with a Russian tycoon like Iorgi Yarcov, who hardly seems any more ethical than Dr. Silence himself, but such is life.

When Zapolya's business associates started dying, he got in touch with Dr. Silence and begged him to save his daughter. Dr. Silence was touched by his request and found Moonshadow charming company for as long as he could keep her. But now it looks as though they are coming for him, too. In fact after a little research he discovered that every one who has ever invented cold fusion has met a swift and unpleasant death (there have been five of them in the past twenty years alone). He supposed he should have checked this first. Too late now.

He wants the PCs to take good care of Moonshadow. Not because he likes her or anything stupid like that, but because he wants to deny his killers some piece of their victory. He fought his whole life, and this will be his one last act of defiance. Hide her well. The image on the screen wobbles. Something is shaking his underground complex down to its roots. He looks up at something. The screen goes blank. At this moment, there is an enormous explosion in the Yukon, which leaves no trace of heat or radiation behind. Doctor Silence's long reign of evil is at an end.

On top of a mountain in the Yukon, Captain Sinister dusts off his hands and then flies south. He has one last stop to make. Moonshadow Zapolya must die.

Let the PCs improvise their response. Moonshadow knows nothing at all about her father's work on cold fusion and she's not much help in a fight. She's just a fragile young PL 2 woman with an Intelligence of 17—French medieval poetry is her academic specialty, not physics. The Player Characters can hide her anywhere they like, call in any favors they have to keep her safe. Captain Sinister will briefly catch up with them and engage them in a

running battle while they ferry her to safety, but the GM should allow them to chase him off or outrun him. He can eventually find them anywhere on Earth.

If they manage to hide Moonshadow somewhere totally inaccessible, like another dimension or a distant star system or the age of the dinosaurs, he will confront the PCs and after beating them around the block he will ask them where he can find her. He's willing to make a deal and he's willing to listen to reason. Unfortunately, the deals he offers tend to have terms like: *"Give her to me or I'll kill five random people every hour until you do."*

If the PCs can convince him that Moonshadow doesn't know anything about cold fusion then he'll give up looking for her—that's less work for him to do. He's surprisingly easy to convince. All they have to do is show him her college transcript. He laughs when he sees her major. *"Wow,"* he sneers, *"that's going to be a useful degree. Glad she isn't wasting her life."* He tells the PCs to stay out of trouble and flies away.

Some months later, the PCs encounter Doctor Silence, broken and lobotomized, working the night shift at a convenience store. His eyes look worse than dead.

3) Doom Comes to Happy Valley



Happy Valley is a plague zone, crawling with viral death. Located deep inside the former Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan, it's a relic of the Soviet Union's experiments in biological warfare. There used to be a secret research center here, with a whole community full of scientists, technicians, maintenance and security staff spread out down the valley. Then in the late 1960s a particularly virulent plague got loose and they had to shut the whole

project down. They surrounded the valley with landmines, carpet-bombed it and shot anything that tried to get out.

They stationed a small garrison to watch over Happy Valley from a distance and the new Kazach government is so afraid of the contamination spreading that they have allowed them to remain there at their posts. For the past thirty years, not even a bird has been able to get out of Happy Valley alive. But not everyone inside is dead yet. The pathogen is lethal in 97.5% of all recorded cases (a shockingly high morbidity rate—not even Anthrax or botulism are that deadly), which means that about one person in forty can survive it. Nearly 50,000 people worked in the valley back in the 1960s, and over the past few decades their population has rebounded. There are about five thousand people living in Happy Valley today. They have a manufacturing center, a working power plant and a reasonably effective sewage, although they are always chronically short on spare parts. Despite everything, they have maintained their faith in Collectivism, and may be the last example of pure Soviet Socialism left on the planet.

Happy Valley is run by a charismatic elected leader named Yuri Olegov, known affectionately to his people as "Comrade Zero" (the name he used to write under as a columnist for their tiny newspaper). He keeps things running efficiently and he has conceived a plan to help end their imprisonment. After accumulating the right components from the old labs, he has managed to build an illegal satellite uplink transmitter and broken into the World Wide Web. The good citizens of Happy Valley have been using the uplink to make money as web-page designers, online researchers and so forth. They have paid off corrupt officials in the Kazakh military via wire transfer to drop them supplies and even a few weapons. Slowly but surely, Comrade Zero hopes to get Happy Valley so deeply intertwined into the new government that he can get them to start working on a cure for the disease. Comrade Zero rules mostly through his strength of personality, and doesn't have much force to back up his decrees. This is becoming a problem. Younger and more radical elements in

Happy Valley want the valley to take a more confrontational stance with the outside world. They are led by Olegov's disenchanted daughter Svetlana, who calls herself "Comrade X" in mockery of her father. Comrade X has taken to the hills with about fifty compatriots and a scattering of weapons and now effectively controls the north end of the valley. They have come to be known as "the Sons of the Virus."

Comrade Zero doesn't have a gang of armed thugs to go root Comrade X out with, and if he did he wouldn't—she's his daughter, after all. Instead he has tried to lure the radicals back into the fold by making a concession to their demands. He is using the satellite uplink to broadcast a pirate radio station, telling the world about the plight of Happy Valley. Comrade X was swayed a little by this, but then a member of her group came up with a plan so audacious that it completely distracted her from reconciling with her father.

The Sons of the Virus have used their own miniature uplink to lure a commercial airliner over Happy Valley. The perimeter guards obligingly shot it down. The pilot was able to make an emergency landing at the north end of the valley, deep inside Comrade X's turf. She has announced to the Russian Government that unless they withdraw the perimeter guards, she will expose everyone on board the airliner to the virus-tainted outside air.

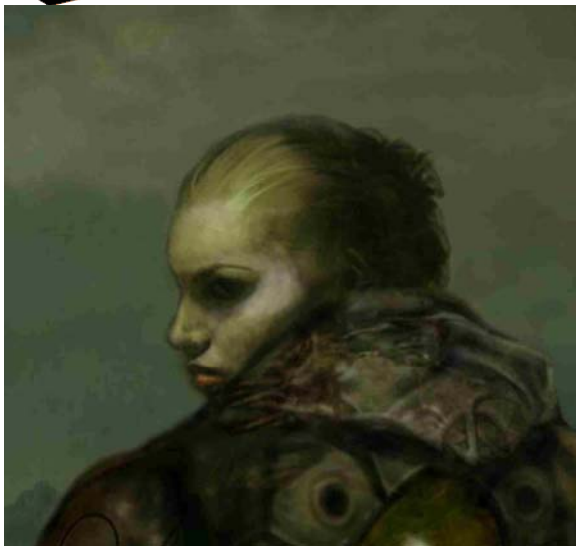
The Russians are shocked—almost no one in their defense establishment even knows about Happy Valley anymore. The Legion of the Damned's Steering Committee gets wind of the whole affair, decides that the world will be in jeopardy if the virus gets loose and asks Captain Sinister to prevent this from happening.

The whole mission is far too high-profile for Jimmy Jorgensen's liking. He has no desire to reveal himself or the Legion of the Damned to that kind of exposure. Much better if some random bunch of superheroes saves the world instead. He contacts the PCs, and explains that the world is in danger and that it's up to them to save it. He explains what Happy Valley is, how it came into being, and that there are still survivors somehow living inside. No one knows what

kind of society they might have built for themselves in there, or how the virus might have affected their brains. They have some kind of leader, called Comrade X or Comrade Zero, who has managed to build a transmitter and is trying to reveal the valley's unfortunate history to the world. The Russians weren't listening to him (or her—Comrade X wears a mask in the broadcasts and there are conflicting reports about his or her gender), so he shot down an airliner and he's threatening to expose the surviving passengers to the virus if the Russians don't let him and his followers out of Happy Valley. Captain Sinister is willing to get the PCs safely through Kazakh airspace to the southern end of the valley, where the minefield is at its shallowest and the guard is stretched thin. He has some bio-containment suits designed for people with superhuman powers that they can wear to protect themselves from infection. They should remember that even if they themselves are bulletproof, the suits are not. He isn't going to let anyone who has been exposed to the virus out of the valley, so don't let the suits get punctured. If they can rescue the airliner's passengers within 48 hours, he won't sterilize the valley. He's provided them with 48 hours worth of air bottles, so it will be easy to tell when they've run out of time, he adds with a smirk. If they aren't back with at least some of the hostages by then, he'll go to plan B, which involves burning up every last living thing in the valley. There are, alas, further complications. Comrade Zero is a decent enough fellow, and if he can see that the PCs are here to help solve his problem he'll try to assist them, but he'll want their help in exchange, and he won't want them to physically harm his daughter.

Comrade X has already taken the passengers and crew off the airliner and exposed them to the air. She's not particularly bloodthirsty, but she will instruct her followers to try to puncture the PCs containment suits if they try to assault her stronghold. And just for one last twist, there is no virus. It died out decades ago. If the PCs can somehow prove this to Captain Sinister, then there might be an unexpected happy ending for everyone.

ULTRA-WOMAN



"The crime is femininity. The punishment is death. Which is FAR too lenient. If I had my way you'd be trapped for ten-thousand years in the horror of your disgusting womanhood."

Real Name: Dinah Dredge

PL: 17

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 18 (+4)

Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus:** 19

Defense: 12 **Toughness Save:** 19 (4 without Force Field) **Fortitude Save:** 15

Reflexes Save: 12 **Willpower Save:** 9 (17 vs. mental attacks)

Skills: Intimidate 10 (+12), Notice 3 (+5), Survival 10 (+13)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Benefit (one of the leaders of the world's most dangerous conspiracy, effectively above the law), Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Power Attack, Startle, Takedown Attack, Tracking

Powers ESP 4 (Visual and Auditory, Range: 1 mile), Flight 9 (Maximum Speed: 5,000 MPH), Force Field 15 (Power Feat: Selective; Extra: 12 Impervious), Immunity 10 (Life Support plus Immunity to Aging), Mind

Control 10 (Power Feat: Mental Link, Extra: Conscious), Mind Shield 8, Sensory Shield 8, Super Senses 5 (Psychic Awareness, Blindsight [Psychic Sense]), Telekinesis 17 (Power Feat: Alternate Powers: Deflection 15 [Fast Projectiles; Extras: Action, Redirect], Strike 17; Extras: Damaging)

Complications: Misogynist (Hates women, can't work effectively with them in team situations, will attack them in preference to all other targets, even if so doing puts her at a tactical disadvantage)

Background: Dinah Dredge is one of the few survivors of the Aleph's race/gender-supremacist enclave in the arctic. Always his favorite disciple, she is perhaps the most fanatical living adherent of his anti-female doctrine. She is of course technically a woman herself, but that doesn't stop her from raving endlessly about the inferiority of womankind and her own quest to wipe the blight of femininity from the face of the earth. If confronted about the fact of her own gender, she will kill the speaker, and then explain to their corpse that her masculinity and manliness are so strong and so perfect that they even transcend the taint of her corrupt womanliness. This is of course, completely crazy. And yet she certainly lacks any trace of softness, warmth, tact, understanding or any of the other positive traits we commonly associate with femininity (or for that matter any of the good traits commonly associated with masculinity).

Ms. Dredge rose out of total obscurity to become the Aleph's right hand in the late 1960s, after his return. In photos from that period she can often be seen standing behind him and to one side, emotionless and rigid. Today she looks only slightly older than she did in 1969. We don't know quite what role she originally played in his quasi-religious organization, but we do know that she was one of only two people to ever develop the fantastic physical and mental powers that he promised to all his followers.

In the late 1960s, as it became apparent that the Aleph had fabricated most of the details about his origins, he relocated several thousand of his core followers to his

half-completed “Temples of Contemplations” on Baffin Island. These “Temples” were a sort of cross between an ashram and an athletic training camp. They couldn’t withstand the rigors of an arctic winter, and as the months of cold and darkness settled in, people began to die en masse. The Aleph claimed that only the unfit would perish, but nearly everyone seemed to be unfit. He grew first depressed and then whimsically cruel. Members of his inner circle ruthlessly suppressed the growing unrest and before long things turned into a bloodbath. It was the happiest period of Dinah’s life. She strode the camps like a goddess, meting out death and agony to whomever she chose. Judge, jury, executioner, her verdict was always the same—Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! Even Captain Sinister found her zeal excessive and disturbing. By the end of that terrible winter, the inner circle had turned upon itself and only three of them were left alive. The Aleph himself, Captain Sinister, and Ultra-Woman.

The Aleph couldn’t maintain his physical form much longer, now that he was deprived of the worship of his dead followers. Their sacrifice had not made him eternal, as he had hoped. So he gave Captain Sinister his gauntlet, to keep until he could walk among them again. It wasn’t long before the men who eventually became the Steering Committee got in touch, and the Legion of the Damned was born.

Ultra-Woman is one of the team’s most direct and aggressive front-line fighters. The most physically violent and perhaps the bravest member of the Legion, she always leads the charge unless the Aleph is there in person. Despite her bloodlust, she takes orders obediently and without question.

She has no compunctions about using lethal force on anyone, nor would she hesitate to torture or permanently maim someone in her power. In fact she might do it out of boredom or annoyance. She cares nothing for whether innocent bystanders die or not.

In her off hours she is plagued by secret doubts. Why are they doing this, serving the interests of the corrupt and

feminized Steering Committee when they could be out purifying the world? But the Aleph speaks to her in dreams and visions, calms her and tells her that it’s all part of the plan (he has little choice—Captain Sinister sold him out to the Committee and he’s completely dependant on the man. He’ll say whatever he has to in order to keep the team together, regardless of his personal feelings). This keeps her calm and loyal to the team. And loyal she is. Ultra-Woman may be utterly devoid of mercy, kindness, compassion, and most of the other traits we associate with human decency, but her loyalty is absolute.

In her person she is humorless and grim. She’s scary and quiet until you get her started on the subject of the Aleph and his vision for a woman-free world—then she turns scary and loud. She seldom smiles when she isn’t in combat, and then you don’t want to see her smile.

Out of all the Legionaires, Ultra-Woman is the one who is least likely to be seen away from the group. She has no real life outside the Legion. On very rare occasions she can stand it no longer and wanders some desolate part of the world, looking for people to brutalize at random. This is the only time the PCs are likely to see her on her own.

Adventures With Ultra-Woman: 1) Cure Me or Die

A psychotherapist named Doctor Barnard Featherstone Gupta comes to see the Player Characters, in a state of wild agitation. He says he has a new patient, a terrifying woman who showed up at his office one day and demanded to speak with him. She’s clearly a superhuman and spends her sessions complaining to Doctor Gupta about someone who seems to be a co-worker or a teammate of hers. She says that she has suspected this person of secret creeping femininity for some time now. It’s nothing she can identify—he looks and acts properly masculine. Nothing that he does or says has any identifiably feminine kind of taint about it. Yet she finds herself suspecting him of secret feminine tendencies more and more. Is there some way Doctor Gupta can tell her whether or

not her suspicions are correct? What signs should she look for? It has not occurred to her that she might be secretly worried about herself.

Doctor Gupta didn't give her a direct answer, but she seemed to find the session so cathartic that she came back for a second one, and then a third. This is an enormous inconvenience—she chases off his other patients and takes big blocks of time. Worse, she's appallingly scary company. Doctor Gupta is constantly afraid that she may kill him if he says the wrong thing. Can the PC's help him?

They may not even believe him. Doctor Gupta is a moderately unsuccessful self-help author, with a reputation for being silly and unreliable. His books are sold in drugstores at a discount and most educated people say that only real idiots buy them. Gupta has also said some uncomplimentary things about superhumans in his writings and the GM should make sure that at least one of the Player Characters knows this (try introducing his crummy books and bigoted ideas about paranormals as a background detail in an earlier adventure). Can he be trusted?

In fact he's telling the truth. Ultra-Woman is in fact showing up irregularly in his office and as soon as she starts to feel uncomfortable with the therapy she will in fact kill him. She has no chance of being cured—even if she were willing to go along with the therapeutic process Gupta is a hopeless incompetent. Anyway her problems are far too deep.

PCs who stake out Gupta's office may get to take a shot at her while she's distracted and vulnerable. What comes of capturing her is up to the GM. Even if she breaks out of their custody they should still have some interesting leads on the Legion of the Damned. Doctor Gupta is even unprofessional enough to share his notes on her therapy with them, despite the fact that this could cost him his license. Of course, if Ultra-Woman stays at large it could cost him a lot worse.

2) Girlfight on Amazon Island

In 1970, a group of female separatists established a commune on the

tiny jungle island of Barang-Barang, in Indonesia's lawless eastern archipelago. The island had until recently been the lair of the infamous arch-criminal known as the Mask of Fear. This fiend had periodically plagued the world since the 1930s, and finally died in a conflict with the Soviet Union's premier super-team (whoever they may have been in your campaign world) in 1968. The Mask left an unknown number of bases scattered around the world, and while the Indonesian authorities discovered this one, they didn't properly clear it out. The Mask of Fear had bunkers, storage sheds, a network of tunnels and heaps of supplies all over the island, as well as a few uncompleted wonder-weapons and other such projects. Because they didn't have the time or men to dismantle everything and make sure all the tunnels were clear of killer robots, they simply declared the island off limits and mined the harbor.

When Marci Morgenstern, visionary leader of the Ithaca Women's Collective found out about the island in an obscure newspaper article, she was seized with inspiration. Drawing on the trust fund of her lover, Lacey Stangle, she got transportation for all one hundred and fifty members of the collective and led them to Barang-Barang. They cut all ties to the outside world and set about trying to build an all-female Utopia.

They have done amazingly well. Amazon Isle, as they christened the commune, has flourished—the stockpiles of food and equipment served them very well during the difficult early years, as did some of the materials they found in the Mask's medical lab.

Marci remains the Mother of Us All, but it is largely a ceremonial position. People believe in her vision and revere her advice, but all real power is carefully doled out between an elected Council of Mothers and a set of three Holy Judges who interpret the law. It's a stable, easygoing democracy with humane rules, where everybody knows everybody else, disagreements are infrequent and crime is nearly unknown. They have slowly phased out a lot of the Mask of Fear's advanced (for 1968) machinery, so that they wouldn't become over-reliant on it, and then get in trouble

when it breaks down. They use small solar and hydroelectric units for their few electrical appliances, cultivate crops and try to live without depleting the island's resources too much. There are constant athletic competitions and everyone trains in combat, mostly with low-tech weapons like swords and bows, although they do have guns and even a particle beam cannon left over from the Mask of Fear's arsenal. The collective also has access to the Mask's medical supplies, including a secret treatment that allows them to bear children.

The second generation is now in its twenties and thirties, and a lot of younger women are growing curious about the outside world. The Indonesian navy and the mines in the harbor have kept people away, so far. Then one day, strangers arrive on Amazon Isle.

Any number of things might bring the PCs to Garang-Garang. They might get marooned here, or shot down by the particle beam cannon when they fly too close to the island. They might be investigating the possible return of the Mask of Fear or might have stumbled across long-forgotten reports that at least one of his lairs didn't get cleaned out properly and is still full of dangerous stuff. Perhaps they need some artifact he had, long ago, to help them with some other case they're working on. Perhaps they see evidence on a satellite photo that someone is living in secret on Garang-Garang. They could even be trying to find out what happened to Marci Morgenstern and her crazy dream, or to locate some long-lost relative who was once a member of the Ithaca Women's Collective.

However they arrive, male PCs will initially face a suspicious reception. Some of the younger, rowdier soldier-women will hunt them through the forest and try to bring them before the Mother of Us All for judgment.

Marci looks quite severe in her ceremonial robes and she will sternly pronounce that the male intruders ought to die. But then a funny thing happens. The Three Holy Judges listen respectfully to her advice, but then don't act on it. They temporarily place the PCs under guard until everyone can discuss the matter and give

themselves enough time to hold a well-informed vote on it. The PCs are free to move around the island, so long as they stay away from sensitive areas like the fertility lab and the weapons emplacements.

Many of the thousand or so women on the island, especially the ones who most revere the Mother of Us All, will be hostile to the PCs and may threaten them, but many more of them, especially the younger ones, will be intently curious and ask the Player Characters all kinds of questions. If the PCs behave themselves, don't get obnoxious about the locals' beliefs, explain that women have greatly improved their lot in the outside world since 1970, and most of all if they have female teammates whom they treat as equals, they will win over a lot of hearts and minds.

When the plebiscite is held a few days later, the Council of Mothers is swayed by the results. The outside world may indeed have changed for the better since 1970, but it still needs help. The PCs are free to go, provided that they solemnly promise not to tell anyone where Amazon Island lies. Furthermore, they will send their most gifted and accomplished scholar-athlete-poetess, Marci Morgenstern's amazingly talented daughter Artemis, out into the world to bring the wisdom and teachings of Amazon Isle to the entire planet and show Men a better way to live.

Unfortunately for everyone, the Legion of the Damned monitors Amazon Isle, as an unsettling but harmless phenomenon that ought to be contained. Ten years ago Marci Morgentstern's oldest daughter Isis fled the island of her birth and set out in a boat with one of the Mask of Fear's lost wonder weapons, hoping to see the world and escape her mother's obsessive over-protectiveness. The Legion of the Damned murdered her before she could contaminate the rest of the earth with Amazon Island's ideas.

Isis' defection is part of the reason why Marci feels so bitter (although she has no idea that her daughter is dead). Artemis is unable to secure her mother's blessing for the journey, but she is determined to find out what happened to her sister, whom she idolized as a child. She will find something

else instead.

For the very existence of Amazon Isle is unbearable to Ultra-Woman. She was the one who agitated for having Isis killed (as misogynist as he is, the Aleph initially didn't think it worth their while to bother with) and she has always wanted an excuse to wipe them all out. She insists that the Isle has now become dangerous and Captain Sinister authorizes her to take action, if only so that she'll stop pestering him about it. She will move to intercept and kill the Player Characters and Artemis Morgenstern (who is probably traveling with them) the instant they leave Amazon Island. If she succeeds, she'll move on to kill every living female she can find on the island—even female domestic animals will feel her wrath.

Artemis is a remarkable athlete (and an even more remarkable poet). She is absolutely no match for Ultra-Woman. It will likely take the combined efforts of the PCs, Artemis, and a thousand or so screaming amazons to bring Ultra-Woman down. It's likely that Artemis will die. If she does, or if there is widespread loss of life, Amazon Island will banish the PCs and separate itself from the world forever.

Typical Amazon

PL: 5

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus (Melee):** 5
Attack Bonus (Ranged): 7 **Defense:** 5
Toughness Save: 5 (2 if Flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Craft (or Profession) 6 (+8), Stealth 5 (+8)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Attack Focus (Ranged) 2, Defensive Roll 3, Precise Shot 2, Ranged Pin, Tracking

Equipment: Bow (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

Artemis

Real Name: Artemis Morgenstern

PL: 10

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 22 (+6) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 14 **Attack Bonus:** 10
Defense: 14 (6 if unable to Dodge)
Toughness Save: 7 (3 if unable to Dodge)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 12
Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Acrobatics 10 (+16), Concentration 5 (+8), Diplomacy 3 (+6), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 5 (+8), Notice 12 (+14), Performance (Dance) 10 (+13), Profession (Amazon Warrior-Poet) 10 (+13), Stealth 12 (+18), Survival 14 (+17)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Acrobatic Bluff, Attractive, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 8, Elusive Target, Evasion, Improved Aim, Improved Block, Improved Critical (With Bow), Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative 2, Improved Trip, Improved Throw, Instant Up, Power Attack, Precise Shot 2, Prone Fighting, Ranged Pin, Takedown Attack, Track, Uncanny Dodge (Auditory, Olfactory, Visual), Weapon Bind, Weapon Break
Equipment: Bow (Ranged Weapon, 3 damage), Device (Rod of Truth—an artifact left over from the Mask of Fear. This psychic amplifier somehow detects lies; Effect: Detect [Lies]; Works at range)

Complications: unfamiliar with the world outside Amazon Island, not used to people who lie or are pointlessly hostile. Won't tell lies, won't do anything she perceives as unethical or unfair.

THE CRIMSON SHADOW



“Take this fool outside and stick something jagged in his brains.”

Real Name: Sebastian Strunk

PL: 15

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 24 (+7) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 15 **Attack Bonus:** 19
Defense: 15 (6 if unable to Dodge)
Toughness Save: 7 (3 if unable to Dodge)
Fortitude Save: 10 **Reflexes Save:** 18
Willpower Save: 15

Skills: Acrobatics 13 (+20), Climb 13 (+15), Craft (Structural) 5 (+8), Escape Artist 10 (+17), Gather Information 8 (+8), Intimidate 16 (+16), Knowledge (Streetwise) 8 (+11), Medicine 6 (+9), Notice 12 (+16), Search 6 (+10), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Stealth 13 (+20)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, Dodge, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 9, Endurance, Evasion, Improved Critical (with knives), Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative 2, Improved Trip, Master Plan, Minions (usually has 25 PL1 thugs, 2 PL2 criminals with more experience and perhaps a PL3 second in

command, all standing around nervously wondering who the boss is going to mutilate next for some minor failing), Power Attack, Precise Shot, Ranged Pin, Second Chance (Willpower Saving Throws), Sneak Attack 4, Startle, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Throwing Mastery 2, Uncanny Dodge (Auditory, Visual), Weapon Break

Powers: Obscure 4 (Visual; 50 foot area), Sensory Protection 6, Super-Senses 5 (Blindsight [Mystical Sense], Danger Sense)
Equipment: Huge Knives (Weapon, does 7 damage in the Crimson Shadow's expert hands; Extras: Mighty, Penetrating Attack), Headquarters (A typical Crimson Shadow Headquarters is an abandoned building with a leaky roof and walls that are about to cave in; Size: Huge, Toughness 6, no features)

Background: A cold, calculating, sadistic master criminal, the Crimson Shadow has stalked the night for more than fifty years, and never been arrested for his crimes. Multiple generations of heroes have fought him and none of them have ever brought him to justice.

He calls himself a masked vigilante,

and there actually was a time when people debated whether or not he might qualify as one, but no one is fooled anymore. Everyone assumes that more than one man must have worn the mask over the years, but in fact it's been the same twisted old monster, all along. These days he requires regular injections of body fluids from young people to keep his aged limbs supple and strong.

He practices a very old school of crime, and hasn't changed his operation since the 1940s. He will move into a slum neighborhood, announce that he is its "protector" and extort protection money from both the local residents and the criminals who prey on them. His fearsome reputation is enough to make most people capitulate. If they don't give in, a few midnight visits and the loss of a few body parts usually changes their minds.

The Crimson Shadow is extremely ruthless, but he seldom actually kills any of the people he is trying to intimidate. Dead men can't pay protection money. Anyway he enjoys maiming, mutilating and disfiguring people more. You can't see a dead man react to what you've done to him, either.

Sometimes he puts together a temporary gang of henchmen to help out with things like collecting money, standing lookout and so forth, but he feels no loyalty toward them and is more than willing to send them to their deaths. He's also a terrible boss, prone to handing out savage punishments without warning. He sometimes dresses his gang up according to a "theme" because that is what one does, but he's been having difficulty thinking of good ones for a while now (oddly, this may be the flaw that undoes him at last—see the first adventure below)

By now he's done this so many times that he runs things by rote, without a lot of imagination or flexibility. The secret of his success is in the way he shuts the operation down. The moment that superheroes or the Mafia start to move in on his turf, he drops everything and moves on. It doesn't matter how well things are going or what he has planned. The moment the capes or the Mafiosi show up, he's out of

there. He'll usually leave them a bribe, which sometimes helps and if he has a gang assembled, he gives them up so that his pursuers won't go away empty handed.

He may sometimes say "*I am vengeance*" to frighten people, but he isn't particularly interested in revenge. While he has no code of ethics or honor, he is eminently reasonable and never does anything without seeing what it might gain him. If he can see that taking revenge against someone would enhance his reputation enough to justify the effort, he'll do it. If he can see that there's no advantage to be gained, he won't do it.

In person he is scary, unpleasant and grim. He seldom speaks, and then does it only to terrify or make demands. When he says anything, he whispers or cackles. Largely driven by habit, the Crimson Shadow doesn't have a lot of interests or hobbies apart from sharpening his knives and hurting people. He just grimly plods through his routine, keeping his useless existence going for another pointless day. He might rob, say, an armored car or a shipment of jewels if they happened to pass through his turf, but for the most part he sticks to the one kind of crime he knows he's really good at. He takes no risks and tries nothing new. In a weird kind of way his lack of imagination is the key to his longevity—that and the cerebro-spinal fluid of a middle-school student or two.

Every few months he flies out to an illegal clinic somewhere in the Alps and returns refreshed, with new fluids energizing his tissues and sometimes some healthy new organs. He needs these trips more and more frequently, and his age is beginning to show in other ways as well.

No one really knows where he gained the ability to call forth the darkness, or to see in the blackest night. He certainly isn't telling.

The Crimson Shadow doesn't care for modern gangs like the Crips and El Rukin. Their refusal to be intimidated baffles and worries him. He usually has to kill them all and then there's no money to collect. Why are they so willing to die for their pride? He has learned to avoid gangstas, and won't move into an area that's under

their control. As these areas grow, his world slowly shrinks.

Not technically a member of the Legion, he met the Aleph some time in the 1960s and got along with him very well (mostly because the Crimson Shadow was scared to death of the Aleph and carefully agreed with everything he said). The Aleph still knows how to find him, and sometimes insists that the Core Command Working Group get his opinion on some matter or other. His ideas are seldom useful, but the Aleph wants them anyway. On rare occasions the Aleph will actually insist that he accompany the team on a mission, although his powers aren't well-matched with theirs and he's no good at working with anyone else.

Adventures With the Crimson Shadow: 1) Farewell My Coney Island Baby

A man in a barbershop quartet costume bleeds to death on the PCs's doorstep. Someone has removed a lot of his fingers with something very sharp. He doesn't look like a typical member of a barbershop quartet, although he does have a handlebar moustache. His moustache looks more like the kind bikers wear and he has a lot of gold teeth with gang symbols on them, as well as a surprising number of prison tattoos. It looks as though he spent his final moments trying to get in touch with the PCs, but ran out of blood just a little too soon. Why?

The Player Characters have heard that a gang which dresses like a barbershop quartet has suddenly appeared in a nearby slum and that they've been shaking down other local criminals. They always sing when they commit crimes, but they do it badly and as though they don't really want to. Combine this with the dead man's amputated fingers and it all begins to sound suspiciously as though the Crimson Shadow is back in town.

The dead man has a key card in his pocket, which bears the emblem of the Wacko Funtime Museum of Huge Novelty Objects, which the PCs recall was closed down some years ago when the Wacko Funtime Novelty Object company went out of business after its founder, Elroy W Acko was sent to prison on charges so sordid that

it is best not to recount them here.

For years the museum has stood shuttered, its displays of giant novelty objects moldering in the dark as the neighborhood around it has slipped into decay. Its ownership is in dispute and no one seems to want it. This sounds like exactly the kind of place where the Crimson Shadow might make his lair.

The PCs are right. The Crimson Shadow has returned. He moved into town, set up shop in the deserted museum, grabbed a local street gang and made them dress like a barbershop quartet to carry out his evil deeds (why a barbershop quartet per se? The old monster doesn't even know himself—it was the first thing he thought of and he wasn't feeling particularly inspired).

Unfortunately, the Barbershop Quartet motif was a poor choice. His minions hated and felt humiliated by it, which made them even less loyal than usual. He had to discipline them harshly to keep them in line and that caused its own problems.

One of his lads, a swaggering young tough named Hector "Infector" Maltisse became so indignant at having his fingers sliced off for insubordination that he decided to betray the Crimson Shadow to the Player Characters. He almost made it. But he may yet have his revenge. The Crimson Shadow has no idea that the PCs know the location of his hideout. If they play their cards right, they may have the first real shot anyone has had at capturing the Crimson Shadow for more than a decade.

2) Crimson Lad, Boy of Misadventure

The Crimson Shadow feels weary and old. Only one thing will perk him up when he gets like this—the fluids of a soft young boy (and perhaps his kidneys and pancreas). He decides to do a little shopping for a suitable lad. Not just any street hooligan will do, it must be a boy whose fluids are worthy to seep through his aged tissues.

Because he can't waste time hanging around junior high school parking lots, Mr. Strunk decides to employ an intermediary to find him the right kind of boy. He takes a minor drug dealer and sometime pimp named Armand "Turk" Jones

and lops off a few of his fingers to get his attention. Then he turns him loose to snatch some likely lads.

Turk prints up fliers, hires bums to post them in places where kids will see them, and leans on a priest who he knows has some unsavory habits to distribute the fliers through his church's youth group. The fliers say that a famous vigilante who haunts the city by night has decided that it's time to choose a new boy sidekick. Any young man with an athletic build, a drug-free past and a love of good clean adventure should contact an e-mail address listed at the bottom of the page for further instructions. Should a boy respond, they are directed to sneak out after bedtime (as a test of their stealth and resourcefulness) and present themselves at midnight on the roof of an old abandoned school.

About six bright-eyed boys show up. Half of them have already made improvised costumes for themselves. Turk paces the roof, trying awkwardly to smoke with his remaining fingers. He looks pretty sordid with his sunglasses, stubble and loud red suit and he's clearly nervous. The two hired goons he's brought with him don't inspire much confidence either. Bald men with goatees and muscles like bowling balls, these stalwart gentlemen go by the names of Slab and Meat. They look like they work concert security when they aren't breaking people's thumbs, and they do.

All six of the prospective sidekicks clearly sense that something is wrong here, so Turk makes some vague, distracted efforts to reassure them. Slab and Meat stand there silently, ready to intervene if a kid tries to leave.

At a quarter to one the Crimson Shadow appears to make his selection. He examines the boys carefully, muttering things like *"Weak blood... Measly... No spark in that one's bovine gaze..."*

Two of them meet his exacting standards of connoisseurship, so he has Slab and Meat put them in one of the deserted classrooms downstairs for storage. They are kept shackled to the teacher's desk, but fed well—their host doesn't want them to grow wilted and stale before he uses them. Both boys assume that this is

another test, perhaps of their escape skills.

The other kids are sent home and warned not to talk. In a few days, once the Crimson Shadow has found a cheap enough air-fare, he will smuggle both his boys to Switzerland, where they will get hustled off to a private clinic and sucked dry of juices and spare parts. The Swiss authorities will be of no assistance to any frantic American parents, assuring them that their runaway boys will no doubt decide to come home eventually—runaways always do. Then they will post a missing persons bulletin, which will of course prove useless (nobody will see the boys on the street if they've long since become so much medical waste in a dumpster or smoke up a hospital incinerator's chimney).

A PC knows one of the two lads in question. He's the child of a friend or a kid they coach on a junior sports team or some other such personal connection. Perhaps he answered the flier because he idolizes the PC in his or her superhero identity and wanted to be just like them (which will be ironic if they both wind up victims of the Crimson Shadow, the soot of their remains drifting up the same smokestack to stain the same Swiss rooftops—it's hard to get more alike than that).

The PC will probably find out about the Crimson Shadow's talent search after the boy disappears, but it's possible that they might see Turk's fliers and get suspicious. A kid could even show it to them and ask if they think it's for real. After the rooftop meeting, one of the boys who didn't get selected could come forward and tell a PC what happened, despite his oath of secrecy. If the clock is running out and the Player Characters can't find the missing boys, a kind-hearted GM can have Slab suddenly suffer a crisis of conscience and give the PCs a call. He has a boy about that age, even though he's not allowed to see him, and he's troubled by the thought of what the Crimson Shadow may intend.

For his part, the old monster will not be pleased that the PCs intend to rob him of his youth and he may be willing to break his long-standing rule and stay to fight them, if one or both of the boys is especially prime.

Turk Jones

PL: 3

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 3 **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 2
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Bluff 5 (+7), Gather Information 5 (+7), Intimidate 4 (+6), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 4 (+6), Search 3 (+5)

Feats: Elusive Target, Improved Defense, Quick Draw (Pistol)

Equipment: Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 damage), Straight Razor (Melee Weapon, 2 damage)

Drawbacks: Disabled (Missing some fingers, performs any skill roll requiring fine motor coordination at a -6)

Slab

PL: 5

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3
Attack Bonus: 5 (4 with Ranged Attacks)
Defense: 5 **Toughness Save:** 3
Fortitude Save: 4 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 5

Skills: Intimidate 5 (+7), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 5 (+7), Language (French), Notice 3 (+6), Search 6 (+9)

Feats: Attack Focus (Melee), Chokehold, Improved Grapple

Equipment: Brass Knuckles (Weapon, 2 Damage [Extra: Mighty])

Complications: Knows a surprising amount about medieval French poetry.

Meat

PL: 5

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3
Attack Bonus: 5 (4 with Ranged Attacks)
Defense: 5 **Toughness Save:** 3
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Intimidate 6 (+8), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 5 (+7), Notice 4 (+7), Search 4 (+7)

Feats: Assessment, Attack Focus (Melee), Chokehold, Improved Grapple, Quick Draw

Equipment: Police Truncheon (Weapon, 4 damage)

Complications: Knows a surprising amount about Beer-Can Collecting.

HELLRAVEN AND VULTURE MAN



"You're dying. What's it like?"

Real Names: Unknown (it is possible that neither one has a name)

PL: 10

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 22 (+6)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 10 **Defense:**
Toughness Save: 6 **Fortitude Save:** 14
Reflexes Save: 10 **Willpower Save:** 3
 (10 vs. Mental Attacks)

Skills: Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+4),
 Notice 8 (+11), Stealth 5 (+8)

Feats: Diehard, Fearless, Fearsome
 Presence 5

Powers: Drain Constitution 9 (Range:
 Touch), Emotion Control 10 (Flaw: Can only
 project Despair), Flight 5 (Maximum Speed:
 250 mph), Immunity 10 (Life Support plus



Immunity to Aging), Insubstantial 4 (Does
 not work against Drains), Mind Shield 7,
 Sensory Shield 10, Super-Senses 10
 (Blindsight [Mystical "sixth Sense"], Detect
 Death, Detect Unhappiness, Detect Magic,
 Radius Senses [Vision, Mystic Blindsight
 Sense]) Telepathy 9 (Flaw: Can only be
 used to read or project emotions)

Complications: Constantly project a
 miasma of hopeless despair, -6 to all
 reaction rolls, have no idea how 21st century
 society works, can't drive a car, don't know
 how money works or how to find a place to
 live, etc.

Background: They came from the
 Thanatos—from the darkest, worst reaches
 of the collective unconscious. Hellraven and
 Vulture Man embody the Thanatic death-
 drive. The will to unhappiness, sterility,

silence and decay.

Last seen in the Egypt of the Pharaohs, it takes a lot to summon these terrible creatures in the flesh, but the Aleph managed it. In the terrible winter of 1969, they hovered invisibly over his arctic camps, drinking deep of the dying and despair. They didn't present themselves to him in person until some time later, while he lay submerged in the nonexistence where he dwells when he can't materialize. They wanted to be with him. They wanted to be near him, and all the death and sorrow that he creates. So he showed them the path to the mortal world, and they followed it.

Weird, morbid, unhappy beings, one is male, one is female, they don't much resemble one another but their powers and stats are identical. They aren't exactly fetches or psychopomps. They don't come to guide the spirits of the dead anywhere—just to watch and participate in the dying and to bathe in the unhappiness it brings. They're very curious about the entropic processes and may ask what dying or sorrow feel like to the people they inflict them on.

For the most part they remain static on the battlefield, hanging in the air like angels of entropy, causing fear and enervation to the team's opponents, sapping their strength and draining their powers without moving a muscle. They don't always appear when the team goes into battle, and seem to operate according to their own strange whims. After the fight is over, they will hover over any dead bodies on the field, poke at them and perhaps take the corpses away and make art out of them.

While they love sorrow and decay and take an unhealthy interest in dead things, they aren't exactly sadistic. Pain is too positive and dynamic an emotion for them. They like numbness better than agony, cold better than heat. They don't have any qualms about killing and they don't understand the difference between combatants and innocent bystanders. Yet they would never think of taking hostages. The concept is totally foreign to them. Nor does physical torture interest them—it gets the victim all stirred up instead of detached and depressed, the way they like them.

They can talk, although they don't say much. When they do speak, it is either to utter some fatalistic pronouncement, mordant witticism or strangely innocent question about unhappiness or death. Often the things they say make no sense. It's hard to tell whether or not they utter threats for much of what they have to say is so unpleasant anyway. Weirdly, they do regularly attend the Legion's meetings and planning sessions, making strange pronouncements or sitting in gloomy silence.

If someone were to capture them, they would become agitated and would keep asking to see each other. They find the thought of separation alien and alarming. Nor can they easily understand or tolerate imprisonment. They would find it particularly trying to be held anywhere that is noisy and hot. In a cold dank dungeon they can at least draw a little solace from all the hopeless grief that has sunk into the walls. If imprisoned for any great length of time they would either lapse into comatose depression or try desperately to kill themselves.

If their physical bodies get destroyed, they can't return to this world until someone else summons them the way the Aleph did, with lots and lots of cold and miserable death, accompanied by massive psychic anomalies. They would be effectively dead for the purposes of the campaign, until and unless the GM decides to bring them back.

Adventures With Hellraven and Vulture Man: 1) This Must be a Monday

A rush-hour traffic pile-up is one of the situations that police and firemen dread worst. Cars come slamming into one another, unable to stop, mounting up higher and higher, crushing rescue workers and fleeing victims alike, smashing the wreckage into new configurations with each fresh impact, crippling the rescuers' ability to plan any kind of strategy. A really bad one can involve more than a hundred vehicles and look like a blood-soaked Richard Scarry illustration, or perhaps a painting by Hieronymus Bosch. There was a really bad one early this morning, under a freeway overpass.

It's a gray, rainy, cold day. Visibility is poor and the roads are dangerously slippery. A jackknifed fuel truck is jammed in the underpass and other vehicles have been smashing into it until there is a pile of one hundred and ten assorted cars, trucks and busses crushed together in a single groaning, burning mass. A school van full of kids on their way to a field trip is under there somewhere, as are about a dozen policemen and firefighters. The fuel truck is burning and the fire is spreading through the wreckage. At least cars have stopped slamming into the mass by the time the PCs arrive.

There is however a worse problem. Drawn by the misery and doom radiating out of the mountain of wreckage, Hellraven and Vulture man hover over the scene. They are intrigued by the way people and their cars alike seem to be in torment and they don't want their contemplation disturbed. They force back anyone who tries to go rescue any of the people dying in the wreckage. If anyone manages to crawl or stagger out of the colossal wreck, they push them back in. Meanwhile the fire spreads. Perhaps there will be an explosion soon, or perhaps a whole series of them. Can the PCs stop this madness before it's too late to save anyone? If Hellraven and Vulture Man get captured, they stay silent, but look really interested in whichever PC has killed the most people over the course of their career. Interrogation gets nothing from them, but reading their minds (if you can stand to) might reveal some interesting images of the Legion of the Damned. Unfortunately, this has also occurred to Captain Sinister and if they don't manage to escape on their own he may have to come break them out.

2) Aqua-World, the Happiest Place on Earth

A mystically sensitive PC (or another hero they're acquainted with, if there aren't any mystics in your group) receives the sudden

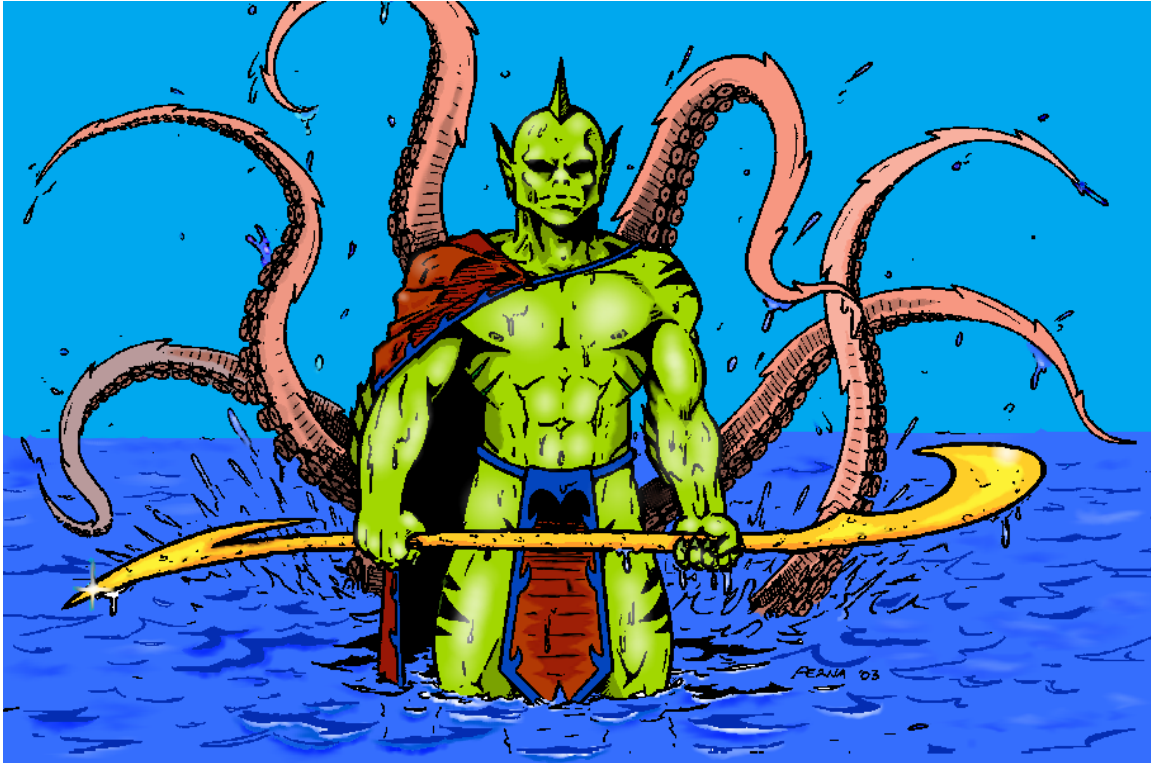
impression that something awful is about to happen. After studying the portents a little, they determine that whatever it is, it will happen at a huge aquatic amusement park called "Aqua-World" tomorrow at around noon. The portents are correct. Tomorrow, at 11:48 AM, a little boy will fall into the whale tank next to the park's main restaurant. The restaurant's patrons (including his grandparents) can see him struggling through a huge pane of glass that forms one wall.

This would be bad enough, but Hellraven and Vulture Man have chosen to visit Aqua-World today, charmed by the suffering and misery of all the cetaceans who are imprisoned there. It particularly interests them to watch the crowds of human families, happy and excited, as the captive whales and dolphins beg them for help and plead for their freedom, without the guests ever being aware of what the creatures are trying to tell them.

But watching the little boy struggling in the tank while his horrified grandparents watch him just inches away through the glass is a rare treat. It even distracts them from the dolphins wailing with despair on the other side of the tank. The dolorous duo swoops down into the restaurant and scoop up a few more children, dropping them into the tank in front of their parents. By the time the PCs hear screams and arrive at the scene, there are a dozen children flailing behind the window while their parents sob aghast, unable to help them. A few of the kids can swim, so Hellraven and Vulture Man push them back down whenever they break the water's surface.

Even as depressed as they are, the dolphins will make a halfhearted attempt to rescue the kids, but they are easily demoralized and Hellraven and Vulture Man drive them back without much effort. It looks as though it's up to the PCs to prevent a horrendous tragedy.

DOCTOR DAGON



"The deep wants you."

Real Name: Unknown (may be "Dagon")
PL: 16

Str: 39 (+14) **Dex:** 17 (+3) **Con:** 42 (+16)
Int: 17 (+3) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 10
Defense: 9 **Toughness Save:** 16 (12
 Impervious) **Fortitude Save:** 16 **Reflexes**
Save: 8 **Willpower Save:** 16

Skills: Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 15 (+18),
 Languages (English, Chinese, French,
 Polynesian, Unknown Language of the
 Depths), Notice 8 (+12), Stealth 6 (+9),
 Swim 6 (+20)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Defensive Attack,
 Environmental Adaptation (Water),
 Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Ritualist,

Sidekick 3 (Doctor Dagon can call on the
 services of up to 3 PL 12 aquatic horrors
 from the deep at any one time, but he
 seldom bothers to)

Powers: Communicate 6 (Creatures of the
 Ocean Depths; 20 Mile Range), Comprehend
 1 (Animals; Flaw: only works on deep-ocean
 creatures—most fish are not subject to this
 power), Immunity 4 (Aging, Cold, Pressure,
 Suffocation [Breathes Water]), Impervious
 Protection 12, Sensory Protection 9, Super-
 Senses 6 (Acute Hearing, Magical
 Awareness, Darkvision, Detect Magic, Ultra-
 Hearing,), Super-Strength 10 (Maximum
 Lift: 8,000 tons; Power Feats: Shockwave,
 Thunderclap), Swimming 5 (Maximum
 Speed: 50 mph)

Complications: Looks like a big weird,

scary fish-man, constantly acts strange and ominous—Doctor Dagon can never fit into human society. Will never venture more than four miles from a major body of water.

Drawbacks: Vulnerable (Major, loses one point from all his stats every twenty minutes after spending more than 8 hours out of the water.

Equipment: Device (Big weird-looking hooked spear; Easy to lose; Weapon, 4 Damage; Power Feat: Alternate Power [Deflection 12; only works vs. thrown weapons; Power Feat: Redirect] Extra: Mighty)

Background: From somewhere in the darkest depths of the ocean comes the creature known as Doctor Dagon. He claims to serve a terrible nameless master that dwells in the deep, slumbering miles beneath the waves, dreaming vast unknowable dreams until the day it once more wakes.

His purposes for Mankind are sinister, but unclear. Seventy percent of the world is ocean and we have less idea of what is down there than we do about the surface of the moon.

Doctor Dagon first came up into the world of light and air some time around 1920. Or so we think—there are hints of earlier contacts with mankind. By 1928 he had taken over a small fishing village in Massachusetts and was conducting dubious biological experiments on some of its hapless citizens. A combined raid by the Army and the Treasury Department wrecked his laboratory, killed his minions and drove him back into the sea. He did not bother to swear vengeance. But ten years later he was back, attacking Boston in the very first major supervillain assault of the 20th century. He had an army of loathsome horrors from the deep at his back, and the Army seemed powerless to stop them.

Observers at the time said that Doctor Dagon's tactics in the Battle of Boston were sophisticated in some regards, yet weirdly deficient in others. His army seemed unused to fighting a battle in two dimensions. Their movements were orderly and precise out of doors, but they rapidly became confused and disorganized in

house-to-house fighting. The entire battle lasted only for two and a half hours. At around two in the morning, Doctor Dagon suddenly called a retreat for no apparent reason. His forces changed tactics, raided the small private Cabot Museum, stole a mummy, kidnapped a few random citizens and withdrew. No one has ever been able to understand why. Some commentators point out that this probably would have been the precise moment the Aleph first appeared in the sky over Texas, but others debate that and in any case no one claims to know what it would mean.

Just three years later Doctor Dagon returned, sinking a Japanese destroyer off the coast of New Caledonia. No one knows why, but the mysterious invader from below had taken the Allies' side in World War Two. Throughout the course of the War in the Pacific he surfaced at odd intervals, attacking Japanese ships on the open sea. He fought independently of the American forces, but he never attacked them, either.

During the Battle of the Leyte Gulf he played a crucial role in sinking the gigantic Japanese battleship Musashi (sister-ship to the legendary Yamato) and the mysterious secret weapon it supposedly carried on board. After this, he was a hero to the Navy. The US military attempted to communicate with him many times, and after a certain point they seemed to have succeeded.

He became close to a Women's Army Corps Sergeant named Dora Norman, who was stationed in Honolulu, and he was willing to come ashore at night and speak with her, listening to her information as to where the Japanese fleet might be found and sometimes giving her information in return. The Navy moved her out closer to the front once they became aware that she could serve as a liaison to the Doctor and his undersea kingdom. Sergeant Norman found herself having strange conversations in the middle of the night on the corpse-strewn beaches of Wake, Guadalcanal and eventually Iwo Jima, watched over by the Navy's offshore guns. She spoke with him at greater length than any human being we know of. It is a shame that she never had the chance to write her memoirs.

After the fall of Okinawa Doctor Dagon left the rest of the war to the Americans, although he did still show up at irregular intervals to speak with Sergeant Norman. Once the war finally ended there was talk of opening up regular diplomatic relations with Doctor Dagon, perhaps making an ally out of him and using him against the Reds. Unfortunately, in 1945 Dora Norman suffered a psychotic break and was confined to a naval hospital. She had a dangerous miscarriage a few months later, and died from complications without ever regaining her sanity.

Doctor Dagon was sighted at sea a few times during the 1950s, and once rescued the crew of a bathyscaphe from the clutches of some huge unseen aquatic predator, but he didn't come ashore again until 1963.

In the early '60s, an insane parahuman hobo with superhuman strength, green skin and very weird eyes went rampaging across the upper Midwest. No one ever found out his name, they just called him the Derelict. In late '63 Doctor Dagon suddenly appeared in the middle of North America, hundreds of miles inland (apparently he swam up the Mississippi river) at Moline, Illinois. He confronted the Derelict in a cornfield, spoke with him at some length, and escorted him to the banks of the Mississippi. They dove into the water together and vanished. Only after the fact did anyone notice how much the Derelict resembled Doctor Dagon.

In the mid '60s he started to come ashore regularly in San Francisco, and actually became involved in the early stages of that city's drug and occult scene. This was the most we have heard of him interacting with surface dwellers, although he reportedly made only brief appearances and spoke little. A number of artists fell under his influence and produced disturbing, drug-fueled paintings and sculptures, some of which later turned out to have foul occult properties. He was an associate of more than one cult leader and is said to have taught weird rituals to a number of groups. As always, his purposes remained mysterious, he didn't answer questions about himself or explain anything about

what he was doing. Every once in a while he would kill someone for no apparent reason.

He tangled regularly with superheroes in this period, and was finally driven back into the sea in the summer of 1969, by a motley, ad-hoc group of psychedelic bay-area heroes and mystics, aided by (of all things) a talking dune buggy.

In the early 1970s the Legion of the Damned was tasked with tracking him down and killing him. Instead he made a deal with them. He will aid them whenever they like, in exchange for not interfering with his undersea realm and killing anyone who tries to research certain areas of the deep oceanic trenches. His Master will wake soon in any event, and the Earth will become an altogether different place, but in the meantime he wants no interference from the surface world. The Aleph agreed to this, and the Steering Committee has gone along with it, so far.

Doctor Dagon turns up at meetings infrequently. While he may still have his army of horrible underwater creatures, they haven't been seen since the 1930s—he always comes alone.

In person he is scary and inhuman. He speaks at irregular intervals and frequently makes no sense. He answers no questions and he explains nothing. Except sometimes he does.

As mysterious as he is, he does have certain recognizable motives. There are objects and artifacts stranded up here in the surface world that he wants, and that he'll go out of his way to steal. Sometimes, but not always, these are artifacts of mystical power. He clearly experiences curiosity, and will sometimes stay longer than is safe to observe a really interesting phenomenon.

Surprisingly, he seems to have a few illegitimate children walking around the surface world, all of them in their late 30s or early 40s. He will sometimes try to protect them, and will take them back to the sea with him if they get themselves in too much trouble (all of them are emotionally unstable, and most of them have superhuman strength).

He's perfectly capable of killing people, yet he does it infrequently. He's never been observed to take hostages or torture anyone for information, and there are some indications that he doesn't understand the concept of physical pain. A lot of women find him repellent, but others love him—he's a big muscular guy with no emotional needs!

Adventures With Doctor Dagon: 1) Hour of Gogmagog

Something big is stirring in the abyssal zone, deep in the blackness of the Japan Trench. The Japanese navy sends a submarine (the "Taku" under the highly decorated Captain Jiro Tanaka) to investigate. This is a less-than ideal way to do it—no military submarine in the world can dive anywhere near as deep as the Japan Trench. However, it will take time to ready a bathyscaphe for the descent and the sub happened to be in the vicinity.

The Taku sends back a confusing, scrambled-up message about anomalous sonar readings, and then vanishes, with all hands aboard. After this, the Japanese authorities quietly request international aid and the PCs get sent in to assist them. They should know immediately that something must be seriously wrong. The Japanese government is notorious for never accepting outside help. They are informed of the situation, told to use their special powers and abilities to find out what's going on down there, and to rescue the Taku and its crew if possible. The bathyscaphe is ready for any PCs who can't withstand the crushing pressures of the abyss.

Suddenly, Dr. Dagon sends a video message to the Japanese naval authorities. He warns them not to attempt the mission. This is his domain, he says, and they are not welcome in it. He will deal with the matter himself. He tells them where to find the Taku. It's resting on its side on a ledge, damaged but not destroyed. Some of the crew could easily still be alive (in fact, unbeknownst to Dr. Dagon, they're all alive, crammed into the forward section—Captain Tanaka has done a superb job of dealing with the crisis, although he and his men won't survive indefinitely down there). They

can go retrieve their silly toy if they like, but stay out of the trench. He won't give them another warning.

Of course the Japanese have no intention of obeying an infamous supervillain, particularly when he makes threats, but they will leave the decision in the hands of the PCs. Most of them will probably decide to both rescue the Taku and investigate the mystery of the trench, possibly dividing their forces. Of course, it would not be good to face Doctor Dagon in his home element with a team that's at less than full strength. However, to the PCs' surprise, they stumble across him on another one of the ledges, gravely wounded from some huge and terrible beast. He's semiconscious, and if the PCs try to speak to him he will mumble something about *"Gogmagog... he wants it... he is coming."*

If the PCs attempt to bring him into custody or drag him back up to the surface for medical treatment, he becomes lucid and fights them with all his remaining strength.

Gogmagog, the great beast, is wounded too, so the PCs actually have a decent chance of beating either one. Here are Gogmagog's stats.

Gogmagog

PL: 16

Str: 46 (+18) Dex: 10 (+0) Con: 42 (+16) Int: 20 (+5) Wis: 10 (+0) Cha: 18 (+4) Initiative: 0 Attack Bonus: 4 Defense: 0 Toughness Save: 16 Fortitude Save: 16 Reflexes Save: 0 Willpower Save: 5
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Skills: Intimidate 4 (+20), Notice 3 (+3)

Feats: Ambidextrous, Distract (Linked to Intimidate), Environmental Adaptation (Water), Fearsome Presence 8, Improved Grab, Startle

Powers: Additional Limbs 4 (Can use up to ten of its many limbs at once), Immunity 5 (Aging, Cold, Critical Hits, Pressure, Suffocation [Breathes Water]), Growth 12 (Size: Colossal; Grapple Modifier: 16; Stealth Modifier: -16; Intimidation Modifier: 8; Space: 30 feet; Reach: 15 feet; Extras: Innate, Flaw: Permanent), Super-Senses (Low-Light Vision, Radius Vision, Ultra-Hearing)

Complications: Compelled to seek a particular spot on the island of Honshu, for

reasons unknown. Willing to die to achieve his objective.

Drawbacks: Disabled (Mute), Hideous (Looks like a giant sea cucumber with far too many eyes).

He looks a little like a gigantic sea cucumber with a mane of tentacles and a thousand or so eyes. Small potatoes compared to Dagon's fearful master, but he's still a formidable giant monster. If he reaches the shore, Gogmagog will make for as tiny, unbelievably ancient Buddhist shrine outside of Nara, but he will collapse and die from his injuries before he makes it.

For his part, if Doctor Dagon gets too badly injured, he'll flee to a nearby teleportation door, which leads into the Legion's underwater headquarters. In his haste, he leaves the door open, and intrepid PCs might follow him inside. There they may learn about far more terrible secrets and face more deadly perils than Gogmagog. But that of course is another adventure.

2) For the Love of the All-Devouring Mother of the Deep

Dolphin Owsley Mckenna, a sculptor famed for his crazed psychedelic vision, goes into a drug-soaked stupor that nearly kills him. When he emerges from the gray edges of death, he is inspired to create his boldest work yet—a piece he entitles *“For the Love of the All-Devouring Mother of the Deep.”* He throws himself off his balcony when he finishes it, but fails to kill himself. There are whispers in certain circles that he tried to sacrifice himself to his sculpture, as an act of worship.

While Mckenna lies in a coma and the art world murmurs in shock and admiration, about one in every five of the people who directly view his nightmarish sculpture go insane within a few weeks. There is no single pattern to their madness. Some suffer nervous breakdowns, some sink into hopeless depression, a few suffer outright psychotic episodes. They say that some observers simply vanish, especially if they view the piece alone in the gallery. One of them reappears in Hong Kong a week later, with his heart on the wrong side

of his body and weird mental powers and an insane lust to destroy anything colored orange (he gets gunned down by a SWAT team before he's able to explain what has happened to him).

The piece has become amazingly popular by the time Dolphin wakes up screaming from his coma. He somehow knows that Doctor Dagon is coming for him. Dagon wants *“For the Love of the All-Devouring Mother of the Deep.”* Who knows what awful purpose he has in mind for it?

If the Player Characters haven't already gotten involved, then bring them in now. The PCs will probably divide their forces to protect both the artist and his horrible sculpture. If they do this, then they will likely get trounced when Dr. Dagon attacks the museum. He's happy enough to tell them all about his plans for the statue. He's here to destroy it. The thing is an insult to his faith. The angle of the fins is insulting, the number of tentacles both impious and incorrect, and in any case the proper way to sacrifice oneself after creating it would be by drowning, not by falling off a building. Ugh! The very idea is blasphemy!

If the PCs are willing to stand aside, this problem may be about to solve itself. On the other hand, if they hurt Dr. Dagon badly enough to make him wary of them, he may actually forgo visiting poor Dolphin Owsley Mckenna (although in fact he just wants to give him a stern lecture on showing more respect to the unclean and forbidden gods who rule the universe in secret).

Doctor Z

The Martian Maneater



"The blind, narrowminded, yummy little fools! Soon they'll all taste my wrath. And I'll taste all their quivering flesh."

Real Name: Herr Doktor Professor Erik Ziemann

PL: 16

Str: 38/18 (+14/+4) **Dex:** 14 (+2)
Con: 26 (+8) **Int:** 9 (-1) **Wis:** 12 (+1)
Cha: 16 (+3)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 17
Defense: 12 **Toughness Save:** 17 (9
Impervious, 8 without armor)
Fortitude Save: 14 **Reflexes Save:** 7
Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Craft (Artistic) 20 (+19), Craft

(Chemical) 20 (+19), Craft (Electronic) 5 (+4), Craft (Mechanical) 12 (+11), Craft (Structural) 20 (+19), Intimidate 10 (+13), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 22 (+21), Knowledge (Earth Sciences) 3 (+2), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 4 (+3), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 1 (+0), Knowledge (Technology) 5 (+4), Medicine 2 (+1), Languages (Dutch, English, German), Notice 5 (+6), Survival 12 (+13)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Artificer, Choke Hold, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Power Attack, Ritualist, Startle

Powers: Immunity 6 (Aging, Disease, Hunger and Thirst, Suffocation 2), Super-Senses (Acute Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Scent, Tracking)

Equipment: Device (Battlesuit: Blast 17,

Enhanced Strength 20, Flight 5 [Maximum Speed: 250mph], Immunity 6 [Exhaustion, Poison, Pressure, Vacuum], Protection 9 (Impervious), Sensory Protection 10, Super-Movement [Permeate]), 75 pts of devices or vehicles (often takes the form of a single huge destructive machine)

Complications: Crazy compulsive cannibal. Does irrational, foolhardy things.

Drawbacks: Hideous (horribly disfigured under his mask, the Martian Maneater is also incapable of acting even vaguely normal. He cannot fit into ordinary society, go unnoticed in a crowd or disguise himself; Common; Moderate)

Background: In 1945, as the allies closed in on Germany, the Third Reich began to entertain desperate options. But perhaps their most foolhardy and irresponsible ploy was to let Herr Doktor Professor Erik Ziemann out of the Bogenhaven Lunatic Asylum, point him at the advancing Russian troops and stand clear.

Doctor Z hadn't tasted free air or fresh meat since 1938, but he felt little gratitude at being set free. He had been one of the pioneers of the new Germany's Special Sciences, the first to create the superhuman *Urbarmenschen* who would lead the Reich to its glorious thousand-year destiny—who were they to judge him? Little men, afraid of his theories and his dietary habits. He had watched them writhe with jealousy and fear as he made the necessary bargains with the Things Beyond the Void and learned the secrets he would need. His early failures filled them with dread and wreaked havoc on their facilities, so to quell the chattering of his terrified superiors he subjected himself to the Ziemann Process, just to prove that it was safe, and emerged a god. And like all new-born gods, he was hungry.

But they didn't understand, (weak, bleating, tasty little sheep that they were), so they locked him away, burned his notes and buried his laboratory under thousands of tons of concrete. Just looking at his new face made them shriek with dismay. And now they wanted him to save them? Hah!

Indeed, Dr. Z felt so little loyalty to the Reich that after feasting on a few

Russian infantrymen and unlucky German civilians, he turned west and surrendered himself to the Americans. The US was only too glad to have him—they were trying to grab every German superhuman they could lay their hands on. They brought him back to the states, listened to his crazy, ridiculous theories, let him perform a few experiments on captured Japanese soldiers and luckless prostitutes, and after destroying the horrible results they told him to focus on fighting America's new enemies overseas.

He undertook some secret combat missions against the Russians, slaying and eating an unknown number of research personnel in the Siberian arctic wastes and demolishing more than one of the "Secret Soviet Science Cities." He regretted never getting to meet the Aleph, whom he admired from afar and who he very much would have liked to eat.

The Army grew steadily more afraid of him, and housed him in increasingly remote locations. In the mid 1950s, they devised a way to keep him permanently at arm's length. They told the doctor that they would fake his defection to the Soviet Union, where he could infiltrate their Parahuman community and bring them down from within.

The Doctor, always strangely foolish and naive for an arch-villain, readily agreed. The Soviets "captured" him in East Berlin, and he became their problem. His American handlers breathed a sigh of relief.

Not eager to reveal his Nazi past, Dr. Ziemann claimed to be from Mars, the Red Planet, here to bring perfect socialist wonder science to the world. We don't really know how the KGB reacted. We do know that in the winter of 1992, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the new government of Kazakhstan found the vault where the Russians had sealed him, back in 1956. Documents found on the site explained that this was the interment facility for the dreaded "Martian Maneater" and that it was never to be opened under any circumstances.

The Kazaks had no idea how to dispose of this security threat themselves, so they called out to the international community for aid. A UN security team flew

out to the middle of the frozen steppe and, with guns drawn, blasted open the vault. It was empty, and clearly had been for years. No sign of the Martian Maneater was ever found.

Dr. Zieman has the power to manipulate reality on a limited scale. Neither his occult nor his scientific theories have any merit (as anyone can tell from listening to him for five minutes). The sinister forces he contacted to learn his terrible secrets are the product of his own demented mind. His fiendish magical/mechanical machines won't work without the power of his brain to animate them. Break open his Terrible Thanatic Ray and you will find a random jumble of electrical components and powerless occult talismans. Perhaps the rotting head of a goat, just to make it especially evil. The powered armor he wears is capable of all kinds of diabolical effects, but it is powered only by his mental force. His fiendish Zieman Process will indeed produce monsters and abominations, but only if he himself performs it—otherwise it's just a pointlessly sadistic course of electric shocks, toxic injections and exposure to radioactive materials.

The first thing people notice about the Martian Maneater is that's he's really scary. The man positively radiates evil and death, and his ranting, hysterical style doesn't help. Once they get over their initial sense of terror and loathing, people tend to notice (if he hasn't eaten them yet) that he's also kind of stupid, particularly for a genius.

Doctor Ziemann constantly raves about his greatness and his terrible plans for the world that rejected him, snarling and foaming beneath his mask. He says hideous, insane things and makes horrible threats (*"I ripped out the backbone of God while he rubbed himself in excrement and tried to pray to me! And I awoke and then I knew that I was born to murder all the world."*)

He's completely crazy, making up conspiracies as he talks, reinventing his lies about himself as he tells them. Sometimes he really seems to think he's from Mars.

Better educated than the Aleph, his rants have a lot more panache. Sometimes

he wants to rule the world, sometimes he wants to destroy it, but mostly he isn't lucid enough to really have a long-term goal. When he isn't on missions, he performs lunatic "experiments" in his lair aboard the orbital base, or reads from occult tomes, misunderstanding them badly. He sometimes experiences long, crippling periods of depression in which he grows totally inert for days, weeks, or sometimes decades.

In combat, the Martian Maneater has a wide array of techniques to draw on and he'll throw everything he has at the opposition in no particular order, cackling and screaming all the time. He's an exuberant combatant, and loves to fight like nothing else. Nothing but eating people, anyway. He has no sense of restraint and he isn't subtle by any stretch of the imagination. Nor does he know when to give up.

If he has built another huge wonder weapon then he'll try to protect it. If it gets broken then he's liable to throw a tantrum, smashing things and shrieking in wordless fury like a two year old or a wild beast.

It hardly needs to be said that he gets along very well with the Aleph. They're birds of a feather.

You can play Dr. Z as broadly comic or deeply terrifying, depending on your mood and his. How scary he becomes depends partly on how much you play up his man-eating proclivities. He doesn't actually need human flesh to survive, although he greatly prefers it. The team feeds him medical waste to help control his appetites, and it usually suffices. He seldom has the patience to prepare elaborate gourmet dishes of human meat, but he does know how, and sometimes pulls himself together for long enough to do it. Eating another human being gives you access to their soul, their memories, and their power, he says. He's wrong, of course, just as he is about so many other things.

Best of all, he loves to devour his own children. He has lost, illegitimate kids scattered all over the world, and when he manages to get the Legion to cut him loose for a little while, he'll go try to hunt some more of them down. Only three of them

have ever developed powers like his (see "Johnny Science", "Shadow Girl" and "Power Pony Princess" elsewhere in this book) and he doesn't know about them yet. When he does find out, he's going to get very excited.



The man behind the mask

Adventures With Doctor Z:

1) Doktor Zed Conquers the World!

Dr. Zed determines through alchemical means (in other words, in the midst of a drug-crazed rapture) that he should steal the Empire State Building. Its architecture has certain arcane geometric properties, which when aligned at the right astrological juncture will create an unlimited source of cryptomantical energy, allowing him to rule the world! Or perhaps to devour it.

This is all utter and absolute rubbish, but he's firmly convinced of it. He thinks that he has to move the building so that it lines up with the constellations as they would be seen from the surface of Mars—but reversed, relative to the observer.

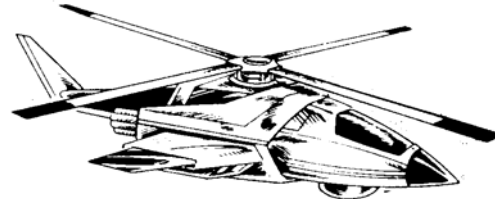
But then he starts to think about the Player Characters, and to wonder whether or not they will find some way to thwart him. So he blows up a hospital to get their attention and leaves a videotaped message at the scene of the crime for them to find. It's very badly recorded, underlit, out of focus and shows as much of the ceiling as it does of Dr. Zed himself, but it's clearly him on the tape, and if the PCs listen carefully they can even make out what he's saying. After cursing the camcorder roundly for being so difficult to operate, and checking a

few times to make sure that it's really on now, he threatens the Player Characters and tells them to keep away from the Empire State Building—they are not to meddle in his secret plans, or it will be the worse for them! Then he tries to figure out how to turn the camcorder back off.

Just a few nights later, a giant cargo helicopter descends over the Empire State Building, and starts wrapping cables around it. The helicopter's crew is fully aware of how insane this scheme is, but Dr. Zed has threatened to eat their families and household pets, so they're playing along with him for now. Meanwhile, Dr. Zed stands in the street and attempts to blast the building loose from its foundations. When confronted, he tells the PCs his whole evil scheme whether they want to listen to him or not. If one of them points out that the constellations look exactly the same from Mars as they do from the earth, he acts delighted, and announces that in that case all he has to do is to turn around, and then the position will be reversed, relative to the observer. He turns his back toward the PCs and stands there screaming that he can feel the power flooding through him, that he is everything, that he could crush the world in his fist like a baby's head now. He's still raving as the PCs clobber him into unconsciousness.

Meanwhile, the cargo helicopter gets stuck up on top of the Empire State Building and its crew will have to be rescued. Dr. Zed will have some explaining to do after his teammates break him out of custody, but fortunately the Aleph likes him so much that he's just about exempt from serious punishment.

A Great Big Cargo Helicopter (But Still Not Big Enough to Pick up the Empire State Building)



Size: Gargantuan Strength: 45

Speed: 5
Defense: 6
Toughness: 9

2) The Reverend Oral Snavelly and the List of Unpleasant Things to Do

Some years ago, Dr. Zed was interrupted while compiling a list of unpleasant things to do. He had put down *"Boil my head", "Walk into a chiropractor's office as though there for an appointment, go into examination room, scream, make horrible crunching sounds"* and was just writing *"Crash Earth into Sun"* when some superheroes broke their way into his lab and distracted him. Now, decades later, he's still trying to find that notebook. He doesn't quite recall what was in it, but he remembers that it seemed very important at the time. His chance may finally have arrived.

A shabby and rather stupid con man named Oral Snavelly approaches the PCs and offers to sell them some lost artifacts of a World War II epoch supervillain. Snavelly is a shifty-eyed little toad, who the PCs know can't be trusted. But it's a slow day for crime, so it might be worth their while to investigate.

Snavelly wants them to meet him at his church (he's the Right Reverend Oral Snavelly when he isn't selling Amway or some fad diet) in a strip mall off the Interstate. His church is officially closed for non-payment of rent, but he's figured out a way to pick the lock the landlord has put on the front door, so he still sleeps here sometimes, he proudly explains to the PCs. He'll let them into his church's dismal interior, step behind his makeshift altar and bring out some samples for them to see.

If the PCs ask where he got them, he explains that some workmen in Germany were breaking open some kind of underground bunker, built before World War II. The whole thing had been filled with concrete, but there were hollow spots in it—rooms that hadn't been completely filled in. It looked like it had been done on the cheap, in a hurry. No one could seem to figure out what the place was originally used for. It didn't appear in any official government records (although to be fair a lot of documents from the Nazi era got

destroyed in the war). Two of the workmen supposedly found some strange scientific apparatus in one of the half-filled rooms, along with what appeared to be the prototypes for some weapons, and a notebook full of plans. They were trying to sell the whole collection on eBay and they seemed to be in kind of a hurry to get rid of it. They took way less money that they should have.

He shows the PCs a ray gun, a scope of some kind, and a yellowed page from a notebook, written in German. All three are transparent, cheesy fakes. The ray gun looks like a metal toy from the 1930s, and it's filled with a random assortment of electronic components, thrown together in no particular order. Someone has crudely etched occult-looking designs on the inside of the casing. The scope looks a little like an oversized set of binoculars, although it is in fact a pair of kaleidoscopes with various colored filters and pointless distorting lenses on each eyepiece. The notebook page, if translated, is a wandering schizophrenic screed about *"Motherhood as an institution planned by Satan and his Freemasons"*. Reverend Snavelly looks proud, and tells the PCs that there's plenty more, but it's hidden in a safe place, and they'll have to pay to get it.

Just as the PCs are preparing to laugh in his face and leave, Doctor Zed tears the roof off. *"My Freeze Ray!"* he shrieks with delight, pouncing on the ray gun. He pulls the trigger and a PL 9 bolt of frost shoots out of it, covering one wall of the ruined storefront church with icicles.

If the PCs give him a chance he picks up the scope next. *"My Zahnoscope!"* he cries delightedly and looks through it. Green rays shoot out of the lenses and scan the wall opposite him, revealing anything made of conductive metal on the other side.

Then, if the PCs haven't clobbered him yet, he seizes poor Reverend Snavelly and roars *"So you are the fool who dared to snipe my bid on e-Bay! Where is the rest of this notebook? There is a very important thing in that book, you nasty, bid-sniping little worm, a thing I had almost finished when they broke into my lab all those years*

ago, and while I can't quite remember what it is, I assure you that I shall have it!"

"The notebook's in my car!"

squeaks Snavelly, *"in a document safe, on the back seat. But it's in the city impound lot right now."*

"Hah!" Sneers the Doctor. *"those fools at the DMV cannot stand against the all-devouring might of Doctor Zed!"*

If the PCs don't stop him, he will fly off with Snavelly and force him to identify the car (although frankly there can't be too many 1985 LeBarons in the impound lot that have document safes sitting on their back seats).

If he isn't stopped, Doctor Zed will find the car, rip it open, and shake it until the safe falls out, along with a small mountain of other trash. Doctor Zed demands that Snavelly tell him the combination, tries and fails to open the safe himself (his gauntlets are too slippery), orders Snavelly to open it for him, and then reads aloud from the notebook.

When he reaches the last entry on his list of unpleasant things to do, he says *"Crash Earth into Sun. Of course! That's what I've been trying to remember to do! And I know just the piece of equipment for the task. Snavelly, what have you done with the rest of my gear?"*

It's in Snavelly's public storage space, but he passes out from fear or gets killed or perhaps even rescued by the PCs before he can show Doctor Zed which unit is his. This should give the PCs plenty of time to defeat the Martian Maneater while he tears open various units looking for the right one. The GM can have some improvisational fun here, letting Doctor Zed discover all kinds of odd things that people put in public storage units and then forget about. He won't find Snavelly's unit, and he certainly won't crash the Earth into the Sun, even if he defeats the PCs.

The Right Reverend Oral Snavelly

PL: 2

Str: 10 (+0) Dex: 14 (+2) Con: 14 (+2) Int: 12 (+1) Wis: 14 (+2) Cha: 14 (+2) Initiative: 2 Attack Bonus: 0 Defense: 2 Toughness Save: 2 Fortitude Save: 2 Reflexes Save: 2 Willpower Save: 2
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Skills: Bluff 5 (+7), Computers 3 (+4), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 1 (+2), Knowledge (Streetwise) 2 (+3), Performance (Oratory) 3 (+5)

Feats: Defensive Attack, Improved Block, Improved Defense 2

Complications: Compulsive liar.

THE BOWHUNTER



"My father would have had you taken out and shot like a dog. But I don't think that would really teach you to know your place. Not like what I'm about to do to you."

Real Name: B. Fenton King

PL: 10

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 8 **Attack Bonus** (Melee): 10

Attack Bonus (Ranged): 13 (+14 with bow) **Defense:** 14 (4 if caught Flatfooted)

Toughness Save: 6 (2 if caught

Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 6

Reflexes Save: 10 **Willpower Save:** 6

Skills: Acrobatics 12 (+16), Bluff 10 (+12), Climb 7 (+10), Drive 4 (+8), Gather Information 8 (+10), Intimidate 10 (+12), Notice 8 (+8), Profession (Stockbroker) 4 (+5), Search 8 (+8), Sense Motive 6 (+6), Stealth 12 (+16)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 4, Attack Specialization (Bow), Chokehold, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 10, Evasion 2, Improved Aim, Improved Critical 2 (Bow), Improved Initiative, Instant Up, Precise Shot 2, Ranged Pin, Quick Draw, Sneak Attack 4, Startle, Taunt

Equipment: Device (bow and arrows, easy to lose; Ranged Weapon; 5 Damage Power Feats: Alternate Powers: Dazzle 5 [Visual], Dazzle 5 [Hearing], Obscure 5 [Visual], Snare 5, Stun 5 [Ranged])

Complications: Hates women, will attack them in preference to all other targets, even if so doing puts him at a disadvantage. Hates poor people, can't stop talking about how much he hates them, can't cooperate with them and will attack them in preference to all targets but women, even if so doing puts him at a tactical disadvantage.

Background: B. Fenton King always wanted to be a criminal. That's not an easy dream to achieve when you're the son of one of America's richest families, but he was determined to persevere. From early childhood, he had thrilled to tales of crime, to stories about John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson and anyone else who stole things and used words like "heist" or "rub-out." But when he attempted to set forth on his career of crime, he was stymied at every turn. He went to private schools and didn't know any bad kids. He didn't even know how you'd go about meeting them—where you'd go or what to say to them. Eventually he was reduced to hanging around with Morris Ellsworth, the disturbed kid who set fires and shoplifted and had headaches and wet the bed. Morris was no kind of responsible partner in crime, but at least he liked to break stuff and set things on fire. In frustration, Fenton worked out a lot and obsessively practiced archery, dreaming about Robin Hood.

For his sixteenth birthday, Fenton gave himself a special treat—reform school! It had been difficult getting in—had taken him years of constant effort with Morris' diligent assistance, but his big day was finally here. To Fenton's disappointment his arresting officers called him "*sir*" and wouldn't put the handcuffs on him. But reform school itself was great. It was everything he had imagined and he felt happy there for the first time in his life. But despite his best efforts to make trouble, he was given early release. He went back to prep school with a rippling set of muscles, a jailhouse tattoo and a whole new set of

skills.

When he found out that the son of his family's new driver sold pot, Fenton and Morris lured him into a run-down boat-house by the lake, where Fenton shot him full of arrows and Morris set him on fire. Then they took his stash. If only they hadn't been so flagrant about the crime, or if Morris hadn't promptly hung himself out of guilt, their criminal career would have been off and running. Instead, Fenton's father's lawyer came to have a serious man-to-man talk with him. They were going to have to send Fenton overseas, he explained. To Austria or Switzerland or possibly the castle they owned in Ireland. Perhaps he could come back to America eventually and perhaps not, but in either case it was time he settled down and accepted his place in the world—at the top of it, not the bottom.

While taking business courses in Vienna, Fenton discovered Ayn Rand and Nietzsche and Hobbes and cobbled together a philosophy out of them. The rich were at the top of the ladder because they deserved to be. Everyone else should feel grateful to them for having created this civilization, with all of its manifold blessings, and should let them do as they liked. The wealthy are like gods and the rules meant to govern mere mortals do not apply to them.

More of his peers already felt this way than you might suppose, but he articulated it with a crazy, inspiring passion that made him a lot of friends. People opened up to Fenton, told him all kinds of things that someone with his views would appreciate. This is what led to his discovery that his father was a member of the Steering Committee that oversees the Legion of the Damned. Fenton now held the old man's most treasured secret in the palm of his hand. As the family's only living son he couldn't very well be killed for it. Fenton didn't want to blackmail his father for money or power in any case. He wanted to join the Legion of the Damned. And so he did.

Fenton is the Legion's resident "bad-boy." It's a role he relishes. Loud, opinionated and obnoxious, constantly taunting his team-mates and holding forth about the innate superiority of the very rich, he's much too well-connected to kick off the

team. He even gets away with mocking the Aleph, although he doesn't push his luck too far there. No one really knows what to do about this vexation in their midst, so everyone tries to ignore him. But Fenton will not be ignored.

He still believes in the philosophy he threw together in business school and won't stop talking about it. He also believes that his birth gives him the right to determine who should bear his children, whether she wants to or not. He's currently harassing the Screaming Shrike, making crudely suggestive remarks to her at meetings, grabbing at her roughly every time they're alone. She doesn't know what to do about this, her other teammates try to turn a blind eye and she is starting to get weird and withdrawn from the psychological damage. Fenton has no idea that he's playing with fire. If she freaks out and kills him, the Steering Committee would certainly have her eliminated, but that won't do Fenton much good.

He has no superpowers, just big muscles and a bow with a few million dollars worth of crazy trick arrows, and he doesn't really integrate well with the rest of the team's tactics. Nonetheless, he always wants to be at the forefront when they charge. A boastful combatant, he's always eager to show off a new trick arrow and to explain to his foes why he is their natural superior.

Adventures With the Bowhunter: 1) Bloodbath on 34th Street (or "*It's a Horrible Life*")

It's Christmas, and the Bowhunter is feeling low. Like he's never accomplished anything meaningful with his life. Like he doesn't really matter. He didn't even have a sled named Rosebud to cherish as a boy.

To cheer himself up and remind himself of how powerful he is, the Bowhunter decides to set himself a test of his abilities. He will hide in the Christmas decorations on top of a department store downtown, look over the crowds hustling past below, and see if he can shoot every third person who walks out of the doors beneath him. A little death for Christmas—ho ho ho! That's what you get for shopping

at the last minute. Naughty!

Everyone is distracted with last-minute Christmas shopping and he prefers to hit his targets after they get into their cars, so he actually manages to kill four or five people before anyone realizes what's going on. When the PCs show up to stop him, the Bowhunter will lead them on a running battle across the rooftops and possibly through the crowded department store, shooting it out with them among the Christmas decorations and hordes of exhausted X-mas shopper, with "Jingle-Bell Rock" and other holiday classics playing on the store's PA system. If he gets into the store, he'll try to use the crowds to his advantage, using the shoppers as hostages and possibly shooting a few for kicks.

As an added, optional wrinkle, perhaps a down-on-his-luck supervillain is playing Santa at this department store to pick up a few bucks over the holidays. He's really starting to enjoy working with the kids, making people happy, etc. Maybe even rethinking his life a little. But to help stop the Bowhunter's murderous rampage he'll have to break his secret identity! Don't add this plot thread if it complicates things too much.

When the PCs apprehend the Bowhunter (if neither they nor the department store's dubious Santa catch him then he'll slip on some spilled eggnog and slam into a big plaster candy cane underneath some mistletoe, where a crowd of angry shoppers beat him near senseless with their shopping bags while one of Santa's elves screams "*Kick him! Kick him again!*") he tells them that they're in a lot of trouble. If they let him go right now, and apologize properly, things might not go as badly for them. At some point in the conversation he spits in a PC's face and calls them a peasant (this is an important detail—make sure not to leave it out). If the PCs try to hold him themselves, the Legion of the Damned reluctantly comes to break him out. They'll eventually send the Aleph himself if everyone else fails. The Bowhunter's father will then yell at him and the matter will be resolved.

If the PCs turn him over to the police, on the other hand, he vanishes from

custody the next day. Nobody can seem to find a record of his booking—the desk sergeant and everyone else who processed his paperwork that night get put on leave, and then transferred to other stations. Most of them get demoted, too, and are instructed not to talk about the matter on pain of further punishment.

However, in either case, one of the PCs still has a Christmas present from the Bowhunter—his DNA, left in his spittle when he spat in their face. It will match his criminal records perfectly and blow his secret identity wide open. So maybe the PCs will get what they wanted in their stockings this year after all!

Department Store Security Guard

PL: 3

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 1 **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Intimidate 4 (+5), Knowledge (Civics) 3 (+3), Knowledge (Streetwise) 2 (+2), Medicine 2 (+3), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Security Guard) 4 (+4), Search 3 (+4), Stealth 2 (+2)

Feats: Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw

Equipment: Nightstick (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

Generic Angry Shopper

PL: 1

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 1 **Defense:** 1
Toughness Save: 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 1

Skills: Intimidate 5 (+5), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Pick one) 6 (+7), Search 3 (+4), Stealth 2 (+2)

Equipment: Huge pile of shopping bags, full of Christmas loot (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage), One or two shoppers will also be packing handguns (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

2) Exit the Bowhunter, Pursued by Furies

The Bowhunter pushes the Screaming Shrike too far and she decides to kill him. She will almost certainly be executed for this violation of the Code, but that just makes her more determined to make sure he dies, for she won't get another chance at it. Her approach isn't subtle. She finds him walking down the hall of the orbital base and starts blasting away at him.

The Bowhunter flees out one of the gateways, and appears not too far from the PCs' base of operations, with the Screaming Shrike in hot pursuit. He bursts his way into their headquarters, and tells them they had better help him or they're going to be in a lot of trouble—his father is someone very important. In the moments before the Screaming Shrike tries to smash down their door, he will be willing to tell the PCs roughly what happened and why she's after him. He won't refer to the Legion of the Damned by name but he will say that the Screaming Shrike is his teammate, although he outranks her, and that they work for *"some very important people."*

If the Player Characters refuse to protect him he names one of their dependants and says that they'll be very sorry to hear the PCs felt that way. How does he know the real name of one of their dependants?

For her part, the Screaming Shrike doesn't want to talk. She's here to kill the Bowhunter before the rest of the team arrives to kill her and she doesn't know how long she has, so she won't want to do anything that will cause a delay—and of course that includes making conversation. In fact, the Legion isn't coming to the Bowhunter's rescue at all. They don't track the whereabouts of Core Command Working Group's members and they have no idea where he is or what kind of peril he's in.

If the PCs manage to capture the Screaming Shrike, the Bowhunter taunts her cruelly, saying that she knows she'll have to die for violating the Code this way. He tells the PCs to forget they ever saw him, and to turn the Shrieking Shrike over to his custody. It is likely they will refuse, or even

try to capture him too. It's also possible that the Bowhunter himself is incapacitated, captured or dead by the time they stop the Screaming Shrike's rampage. If he's out of action, or has to leave empty handed, then two days later Ultra-Woman shows up to collect the Screaming Shrike.

While she's in the PCs' custody, the Shrike lapses into a terrible depression and won't want to talk to anyone. But a clever PC who spends some time and makes some skill rolls may coax her into betraying her comrades and telling them her whole story.

THE SCREAMING SHRIKE



"When I scream, God sticks his fingers in his ears."

Real Name: Andrew Avril Norquist
PL: 12

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 12
Defense: 12 **Toughness Save:** 5 (2 if caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 6
Reflexes Save: 10 **Willpower Save:** 8

Skills: Bluff 10 (+14), Computers 4 (+6), Diplomacy 10 (+14), Disable Device 8 (+10), Disguise 8 (+12), Gather Information 9 (+13), Investigate 5 (+7), Knowledge (Current Events) 5 (+7), Notice 9 (+10), Perform (Acting) 6 (+10), Profession (Spy) 10 (+12), Stealth 8 (+11), Sense Motive 12 (+13)

Feats: Assessment, Attractive, Critical Strike (with Sonic Blast), Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Distract (linked to Bluff), Fascinate (Linked to Diplomacy), Favored Opponent (Constructs) 2, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Improved Throw, Instant Up, Stunning Attack

Powers: Energy Control (Sound) +12 (Extras: Area Effect [Cone], Energy Blast, Fatigue, Mind Control; Flaw: Mind Control is

Obvious, people under her control stagger and shuffle like zombies, making weird facial twitches and repeating her commands tonelessly over and over until they complete them; Cost: 5pts)

Powers: Sonic Control 12 (Power Feats: Alternate Powers [Blast, Illusion: Auditory, Emotion Control, Mind Control (Flaw: Sense-Dependant: Auditory), Nauseate: Vertigo Obscure: Auditory])

Complications: Getting dangerously depressed and traumatized. May snap and go berserk soon.

Background: She can scream in ways that hurt your mind and blast your soul. Her voice is attuned to subtle frequencies that have all kinds of terrible effects on the human brain. She knows the exact pitch of despair, the precise key of rage and all the harmonics of agony. While she can just as easily sing notes of love or happiness as chords of pain and terror, it somehow doesn't seem to come up nearly as often.

She comes from a long and dusty line of spies, killers and generals. Her ancient, inbred Virginia family has fought America's clandestine wars for over a century. They would never have let a woman take on the family duties, but she is their last heir (that's why her first name is "Andrew"—it would have been unthinkable to name the heir anything else). So they sent her to military academy, and then to the secret schools where the sons of the intelligence community learn their fathers' trade.

Most of her classmates were from spy families as old as hers. All of them were boys, which caused problems. From the first day she entered military academy, Avril found herself in a world where women were regarded with suspicion. She tried to survive by doing ten times as well as any of her male classmates, and by adopting as anti-feminist a stance as possible. Neither one helped completely, but it took the edge off some of the abuse.

In her Junior year at the Academy her father died on some nameless mission overseas the day before midterms. She refused to take bereavement leave to attend his funeral and finished midterms with the

best grades in her class.

After college, Avril worked for the National Security Council and then for some agencies that don't officially have names. Despite loudly denouncing women who used their gender to get ahead, she had no objection to having affairs with superior officers (especially if they reminded her of her cold and unhappy father) and used a string of these connections to advance herself through the ranks. Yet despite using every tool at her disposal, Avril still drew lousy assignments and got passed over for promotions.

Desperate to live up to her dead father's legacy, she volunteered for an extremely dangerous Human Enhancement program, and came out of it with a voice that could shatter minds and glass alike. She has the transplanted vocal cords of some Czechoslovakian super-agent who had the bad luck to get caught in the late 1980s, just before the Cold War ended. It took years to learn how to use them. For a long time she was forever shattering windows and turning people psychotic by accident. But now she's better at using her powers than the voice's original owner.

Despite her best efforts to serve her agency well, some years ago a jealous male superior framed her as a double-agent. They would have given her a quiet field-execution and an unmarked grave (passing her vocal cords on to some other agent), but the Steering Committee for the Legion of the Damned intervened. Now she works for them as an Associate.

Her gung-ho attitude and violently anti-feminist stance has endeared her to every member of the Core Command Working Group but Ultra-Woman, who says that the Shrike may mouth the words and believe the ideals, but it can't overcome the fact that she's a woman. Nothing can make up for her tainted double-X chromosomes. Her femininity runs too deep to ever be expunged. Ultra-Woman is incapable of seeing the irony. If someone were stupid enough to point out that she's being a hypocrite, Ultra-Woman wouldn't even be offended—she just wouldn't understand.

Most of the people who have worked with the Shrieking Shrike would

describe her personality as proactive, businesslike, driven, and extremely aggressive. Always the first through the door, always the team member who takes the biggest risks, always ready with a threatening soliloquy. They wouldn't recognize her now. After so many years of claiming that sexual harassment is a myth dreamed up by man-hating feminists, she started to believe it, and now that it's happening to her, she has absolutely no idea what to do about it.

The Bowhunter is constantly harassing and abusing her, grabbing at her and making crude remarks whenever he can. Unfortunately, his father is a member of the Steering Committee, so the other members of the Core Command Working Group can't really do anything to stop him from misbehaving. They try to ignore his bad behavior, except for Ultra-Woman, who taunts the Shrike about it.

Unable to cope with this situation, the Screaming Shrike has been retreating further and further into herself, becoming quieter and more passive and depressed as time goes on. She barely speaks at all now, and stumbles through her days in a weary fog. She spends as much of her time as possible asleep. Yet this should not make the PCs underestimate her. Combat is her one chance to get away from the mess back at headquarters, and she comes alive when she's on assignment (unless of course they've sent the Bowhunter with her). Not especially sadistic, she is ashamed of the fact that she still has nightmares about everyone she has ever killed. To keep from having more bad dreams, she tries to avoid using lethal force unless she has to. Anyway it's more satisfying to scramble someone's brains. A competent (if unoriginal) tactician when she can pull herself together, she'll try to get opponents to hit one another, try to use the ground to her best advantage, and avoid direct head-on confrontations with the enemy as much as possible, hitting by surprise and from behind if she can. She's not that good at thinking up clever quips anymore, but she still remembers some of her old ones.

Adventures With the Screaming Shrike: 1) The Zhukov Gambit

A disgraced former Soviet bureaucrat named Alexander Zhukov is selling off the access codes to old Russian military satellites. In order to move freely in the West, he has invented a brilliant if ridiculous cover story. He claims to be an intuitive chess genius, unrecognized by the organized chess world because it fears and hates him, more than a match for any established grandmaster. He is touring the US, playing public chess tournaments at every stop, losing every game, constantly claiming to have been cheated, and trying to peddle his satellite codes on the side.

He's like an insane parody of a Russian chess genius with his graying goatee, wild mane of hair and frenzied, arrogant manner. He'll do outrageous things like playing fifteen spectators in fifteen different chess games at once and losing every one simultaneously. He'll play a local chess champion, lose badly and then move on to the next city claiming to have won.

A number of shadowy parties, including the Russo-American mob and your campaign world's most prominent villainous organization have already expressed an interest in meeting with him, as has more than one major supervillain. He'll sell the codes to each of them in turn—after all, it's not like the codes just go away once he tells them to someone.

The PCs should be aware of the bizarre spectacle that Zhukov is making of himself, and get drawn into the case when it becomes clear that someone is trying to kill this chess-playing madman at every stop on his trip. Only the unexpected intervention of a supervillain or two has saved his life so far.

Perhaps a Player Character goes to one of his demonstrations in a public park or a huge bookstore (perhaps they're even there to play him at chess) when there is another attempt on his life, and either some Russian gangsters or a minor supervillain like Harlequin 9 mysteriously come to his defense. Perhaps more than one interested party has a representative in the audience and they briefly draw guns on one another

until they all turn on Zhukov's mysterious assailant. Who is hunting Zhukov, and why were gangsters (or a supervillain) sitting in the audience?

In fact, the Screaming Shrike has been assigned to kill Zhukov and take his codes—all of the satellites in question have been programmed not to notice the Legion of the Damned's orbital base, but if random supervillains and criminals start messing around with their programming, who knows what they might find? If the PCs capture the Screaming Shrike she will tell them all about Zhukov's illegal side-business, but lie and say that she works for a secret agency of the US government. She'll appeal to their patriotism and beg them to let her go do her duty. She'll also claim that she's here to capture Zhukov and turn him over to the Russian authorities. If they go along with her she'll kill Zhukov instead of capturing him, and then try to blackmail the PCs (who are now accessories, she points out) into silence.

Alexander Zhukov

PL: 4

Str: 8 (-1) Dex: 10 (+0) Con: 12 (+1) Int: 18 (+4) Wis: 10 (+0) Cha: 18 (+4) Initiative: 1 Attack Bonus: 0 Defense: 4 Toughness Save: 0 Fortitude Save: 1 Reflexes Save: 1 Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Bluff 9 (+13), Concentration 6 (+6), Computers 1 (+5), Intimidate 6 (+10), Knowledge (Civics) 3 (+7), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 5 (+9), Languages (Russian, English, Lithuanian), Notice 4 (+4), Perform (Acting) 5 (+9), Perform (Oratory) 9 (+13), Profession (administrative worker) 7 (+11)

Feats: Improved Defense, Evasion, Second Chance (Performance rolls), Startle, Taunt
Complications: Lying, irresponsible idiot. Loves attention.

2) Mother Do You Think I'm Good Enough?

In a moment of weakness, the Screaming Shrike blurts out all her troubles to her mother. She doesn't tell her that she's a parahuman, she doesn't reveal anything about the Legion of the Damned, but apart from that she relates the whole

ugly story. Her mother does not believe her, but it is clear that Avril is intent on making trouble for a very important family, so she tells the Bowhunter's father all about it.

Mrs. Norquist is only too well aware of her family's precarious status. They were well-to-do but never rich the way the Bowhunter's family was rich, never born to be spies and generals. Instead they had to work for it. But no matter how hard they work or how well they perform they will always be the hired help. Mrs. Norquist is horrified and indignant that her daughter would jeopardize everything the family has worked toward for generations by making such scandalous accusations. She apologizes to Mr. King at great length and assures him that she will do whatever is in her power to keep her wayward daughter in line.

Unfortunately for everyone, Mr. King panics and assumes that Mrs. Norquist now knows all about the Legion of the Damned. What's worse, as a Norquist (if only by marriage) she has contacts all across the intelligence community who might be able to do real harm to the Legion. And she has a bit of a sinister reputation in those circles as well—people whisper that she was always the brains and the steel behind her husband's career. She has to die, and quickly, before she has a chance to move against them. Mr. King informs the Core Command Working Group of the Screaming Shrike's transgression, and while Ultra-Woman wants the Shrike executed on the spot, Captain Sinister has a better, crueler idea. He assigns her to kill her mother.

However, just as Mr. King suspected, Mrs. Norquist is not without resources of her own. She noticed the way he kept asking her if any other people know about this matter, and correctly surmised that she wasn't supposed to know that their children work together. While she hasn't quite figured everything out (she thinks that Avril and Fenton must both work in some kind of black operations military unit) she certainly knows that she is going to be killed. Determined not to go down without a fight, she calls in every last favor she has in the intelligence community, and manages

to get some of her husband's old colleagues to bring in the PCs to protect her. She is a difficult woman and the fact that she hates superheroes complicates dealing with her. She picked the PCs because, for one reason or another, she dislikes them, considers them unpatriotic (even "patriotic" heroes) and so is quite certain that they have no loyalty to the people who are coming to kill her. She can't coerce the PCs into protecting her, but she will use every trick she can think of to make them help her. She will beg them if she has to, she will make empty threats if she has to, she will promise them favors that she can't deliver if she has to. If the PCs still look dubious, the GM should have the Screaming Shrike attack right at that very moment.

Mrs. Norquist thought they'd probably send Avril—it's the way these people think. The PCs can see from the look on her face that Mrs. Norquist is actually proud of her daughter for being able to make herself follow through on such a difficult assignment.

The Screaming Shrike will pursue the PCs no matter where they hide her mother. However, in the meantime Captain Sinister has been reviewing the tape of Mrs. Norquist's conversation with Mr. King (he has the old man's study bugged) and has found to his distaste that Mrs. Norquist clearly doesn't know anything about the Legion of the Damned itself. The Shrike must not have told her anything really damaging. In addition, all kinds of shady intelligence types are starting to ask awkward questions about this matter. Mrs. Norquist might actually turn out to be a bigger hassle dead than alive. He attempts to abort the mission, but he's having some trouble getting through to the Screaming Shrike and may be too late to avert a hideous family tragedy.

The Blue Bolt

(aka Roadrash)



"I'll kill you quick, but you'll die slow."

Real Name: Alvin Barrymore

PL: 11

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 12 (+1)

Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 48 **Attack Bonus:** 11

Defense: 16 (4 if caught Flatfooted)

Toughness Save: 4 (1 if caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 6 **Reflexes**

Save: 14 **Willpower Save:** 8

Skills: Acrobatics 11 (+15), Bluff 6 (+8), Intimidate 7 (+9), Knowledge (Tactics) 8 (+8), Notice 8 (+8), Sense Motive 8 (+8), Survival 8 (+8)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, Assessment, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 6, Elusive Target, Equipment, Evasion 2, Fearless, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Quick Change, Startle, Taunt, Takedown Attack, Track

Powers: Super-Speed 11 (Maximum Speed: 25,000 mph; Power Feats: Alternate Powers [Air Control 11, Strike 11], Rapid Attack, Rapid Fire, Wall Run, Water Run)

Complications: Compulsive killer, will attempt to murder anyone who annoys him.

Equipment: Flash Protection Goggles (Sensory Protection 6, Visual), Ear Protection (Sensory Protection 5, Auditory)

Background: A stone cold killer at a thousand miles an hour, he's the fastest man alive and maybe one of the worst. He knows no fear, and things like pity and mercy are just as foreign to him. Totally unfazable, utterly murderous, he kills for nothing and he cares for nothing, too.

It is his policy to kill anyone who trifles with him in any way, no matter how trivial. And he knows lots of cool ways to use his powers to kill and maim. He likes to break necks with whiplash, to ram people into objects at 800 mph, to snatch ears, lips or eyelids off opponents as he runs past. But most of all he loves to drag people, rubbing them into bloody mush as he streaks on down the road.

In person he's surprisingly quiet and relaxed, uninterested in small talk or in anything else except for getting what he wants. Homicidal if provoked or thwarted, he doesn't go out of his way to seek conflicts. His eyes are gray and distant and empty.

The Blue Bolt has a lot of cunning and a superb gift for sizing up how to turn a situation to his advantage, but he isn't very well educated. His opinions on most topics are shallow and poorly informed. He hates people who don't speak English well enough, he thinks mandatory car insurance is a plot, he feels that a woman's place is in the kitchen and he despises *"the Washington lobbyist elite"* although he's not sure what that means. Disagreeing with him on these things isn't usually enough to provoke a lethal reaction since he doesn't really care much about them.

He used to be a celebrity—not a superhero, exactly, but a superhuman daredevil who performed incredible high-speed stunts. He would jump big rows of buses and run up the sides of skyscrapers in front of cheering crowds. He never much seemed to care whether he succeeded or not. And this was really the secret to his fame. For his failed stunts always got more

press than his successes. *"They come to see me run, but they pay to watch me die"* he used to say, with no particular bitterness. He once tried to leap over Hell's Canyon in Idaho, spent six months in the hospital afterwards and came out to find that he was now a national celebrity.

But his personality couldn't hold up under the press' scrutiny. He was perfectly presentable so long as he remained a faceless guy in a flashy costume jumping from one tower of the World Trade Center to the other. Under the spotlight, his basically cruel and hateful nature was all too apparent.

When a newspaper reporter named Kendall Biggs wrote an unflattering article about him for the New York Post, he tracked Biggs down and maimed him in various ugly ways. It took the efforts of a whole superhero team to bring the Blue Bolt in for arrest, and it cost a dozen lives. He misbehaved and acted disruptive at his trial, which secured him a longer-than-average sentence. When asked by the press if he had any regrets about his actions, he said: *"@#\$% with me, man, and that's what you get. I'll kill any man crosses me."*

Two years ago he finally came up for a parole hearing, but the Federal Department of Prisons found that it was unable to account for his whereabouts. He was gone from custody, and they had no idea how or when. It is widely believed that wherever he is now, it's just a matter of time before he screws up, kills somebody and gives himself away. He can outrun bullets but not himself.

Adventures With the Blue Bolt: 1) Doctor Quoq and the Gravity Machine

Dr. Quentin Quoq has made a breakthrough in the field of physics that could revolutionize the world—gravity control! While Dr. Quoq is undoubtedly a genius, he's young and arrogant and unpopular in his field for it. He has no corporate backing for his research project, just a small federal grant that he got approved for a completely unrelated project. He's using lab space at a crummy downtown state school in the Player Characters' home city and a volunteer staff of enthusiastic

graduate students (most of whom are older than he is).

This discovery does not sit well with the Legion of the Damned's Steering Committee. Gravity control could change the world in all sorts of unpredictable ways, undermine the stability of the major oil companies, shake up the stock market. Worse, Dr. Quoq is a maverick, a lone wolf, not affiliated with any of the world's major corporate powers—his discovery could make a lot of money, but not for anyone important. None of this will do. Not only does Dr. Quoq have to die, but his discovery has to be seen as a dangerous dead end. They are about to sabotage his machine during its first real test, when all five of his assistants are present (so as to wipe them all out at once). The device will malfunction and create an implosion just big enough to mash Dr. Quoq, his assistants and most of his notes into one big squishy ball.

The Blue Bolt is the only member of the Legion who would be immune to the effects of a localized gravity well (it has to do with the way his powers distort time, but it's too technical to address in depth here) so they give him careful instructions on how to sabotage the device correctly and set him loose. Unfortunately for everyone but Dr. Quoq and his team, he stops to get his bearings on a streetcorner downtown, and a sullen young goth girl mocks his costume for looking outdated. *"Hey,"* she yells *"I thought it wouldn't be the eighties again for at least another seventy-five years."* He slaps her around for her impudence, saying *"I'll tell you it's the eighties whenever I please, you hear me girl?"*

A young Pakistani man, an engineering student at the university where the Blue Bolt is headed, yells at him to settle down and leave the girl alone. This is absolutely the last straw for Roadrash, who kills them both, horribly.

As luck would have it, a Player Character is in the vicinity, in costume, just finishing up with some other matter. The incident doesn't happen right in front of them, in fact it's a few blocks away, but traffic suddenly clogs up, people start yelling and screaming, and some of them are shouting the name *"Road-Rash."*

Roadrash? The Blue Bolt? The famous supervillain who vanished from federal custody years ago? What PC could resist an opportunity like this?

When superheroes arrive on the scene, the Blue Bolt really should get out of there and get on with the mission. But his aggressive nature won't let him. He'll stay to fight, and while he's grappling with them on the crowded sidewalk, Dr. Quoq begins his experiment. Then one of his assistants gets distracted by all the noise and commotion going on down the street, and makes a grievous error. A much bigger gravity well disaster begins than the one that Roadrash was going to cause. This one is huge enough to destroy everything in a five block radius. That includes some big buildings, all of them full of office workers at this hour.

A bubble of light expands out of the lab, engulfing everything in its path. It will grow at a rate of five squares per round. Everything inside silently vanishes from view. Immediately outside the bubble is a 1 square wide zone of destruction, running in a circle all the way around its circumference. Everything in that zone suffers a PL 2 attack—enough to crumple up a car's bodywork, break windows and obliterate drywall, but not enough to knock down a skyscraper. In front of this is a 2 square radius zone where every object that weighs less than three hundred pounds is being pulled toward the sphere by a force with the equivalent of a Strength of 15.

As soon as the disaster begins, Roadrash tries to break off combat with the PCs and explain that he's the only one who can stop this disaster, that it's what he was sent here to do before those kids distracted him. They've got to let him go or a lot of people are going to die.

The PCs have a decision to make. Do they turn loose a vicious killer in order to save more lives? If they ask him, Roadrash can explain roughly what's going on here, can describe what Dr. Quoq has been working on and why *"certain important people"* don't want to see him succeed. The PCs' best option is probably to let him try to turn off Dr. Quoq's machine, but send some members of their own team with him.

Anyone with the power Super-Speed is completely unaffected by the gravity well (mere "Quickness" isn't enough), but only while they're actually using the power. They aren't pulled in and they don't take damage. They can move in and out freely.

Teleportation is disrupted by the field, but not too badly. A teleporter must roll vs. DC 20 to enter the sphere. Characters with Gravity Control can make a roll vs. DC 15 to resist the gravity well's effects. Anyone else can simply brave the damage and enter the sphere.

Leaving is not so simple. Characters with Super-Speed can move in and out of the area at will, characters with Gravity Control, Shrinking or Teleportation Powers can do it with a roll vs. DC 25, but for anyone else it's flatly impossible.

The buildings inside the sphere have taken some superficial damage, all the windows on the street are broken and there are a lot of injured people lying around, but there have not been very many fatalities. Once the PCs turn to look outside the sphere, however, they see something alarming. This whole chunk of their city seems to have been teleported into the trackless depths of outer space! Unfamiliar stars surround them in all directions, no sun appears to be anywhere nearby. If they give him a chance, Roadrash warns them that once the field hits its maximum size it switches off and this whole area gets stranded out here permanently. The air should leak away just a few seconds after the field goes dead. He's making all this up, but coincidentally it also happens to be true. He thinks he can turn off the machine in the right way to put this piece of the city back where it belongs.

Inside the lab, Dr. Quoq and his assistants float unhurt in a gravity bubble, right in the eye of the storm. The machine is inside the bubble with them. It takes a Strength or power roll vs. DC 20 to fight your way into the bubble. Once inside, Roadrash will try to kill Dr. Quoq and his assistants. It may occur to the PCs that Dr. Quoq surely knows how to turn the machine off himself, if they can keep him alive for long enough. A fight probably ensues.

If Roadrash beats the PCs then he

shuts the machine down successfully, returns the missing piece of city to its proper place and leaves them in the ruined lab, surrounded by dead scientists. If they beat him, then either Dr. Quoq or one of his assistants can shut the machine down correctly. If there's no one else left standing, a PC gadgeteer can do it with a roll vs. DC 25. Anyone else who tries automatically makes a bad mistake. If a player character tries and fails to shut the machine down correctly, or if it gets smashed (it has a Hardness of 5) then the city snaps back into place, but everyone inside the gravity bubble with Dr. Quoq gets flung off into some distant dimension, and will have to go through a series of strange adventures to find their way home.

Whether or not Roadrash gets caught, poor Dr. Quoq (if he survives) gets sued by every city and state agency you can imagine, has his name dragged through the mud and just barely escapes being sent to prison. A court order permanently bars him from ever exploring this line of research again, his notes are taken away from him and sealed, under court order. Perhaps he grows so embittered that he uses his understanding of gravity control to become a supervillain himself? If he does, the Black Sun will be annoyed that someone is stealing his schtick.

2) Death of a Paparazzi

Darla Biggs is not a very nice woman. She's a trashy journalist who writes celebrity scandal pieces for the tabloids. Darla is nowhere near the top of her profession, so the PCs may not have heard of her before she seeks them out for an interview. Crass and obnoxious, she probably manages to offend them with her questions. She's not interested in the PC themselves, she wants to know anything they might have heard about the supervillain called Roadrash and why the superhero community has proved itself unable to catch him. Even if the PCs have never actually fought Roadrash themselves, she won't let up on the question of why they've never brought him to justice.

Some time later, the PCs hear a rumor that some fly-by-night publisher is

preparing a new and utterly scandalous tell-all book about Roadrash. Darla Biggs contacts them again shortly thereafter. It's her book, she's been writing it for years, and if they're willing, she thinks she can use it to help them catch one of America's most wanted supervillains. The PCs may be wary of speaking to her after their first encounter, but she's persistent.

If they visit her at her home (a humble little bungalow in a run-down working class neighborhood) they find her very different from the woman who thrust a microphone in their face before. Darla seems pensive, thoughtful, apologetic for her earlier rudeness. The house is full of photos and mementos of her dead husband Kendall Biggs.

Darla explains everything. Twenty years ago, her husband Kendall was a journalist. They had just bought their first house together and the future looked pretty bright, when Kendall wrote a fatal article on the superhuman masked daredevil who everyone still called the Blue Bolt. He misquoted some facts about the Streak's past, was critical of his drinking and his flagrant disregard for public safety. Kendall Biggs was Roadrash's first known victim. The speedster showed up at his office in a rage and dragged him until most of his skin came off. Kendall killed himself a few years later, in horrible pain, after a prolonged stay in the hospital and numerous failed skin grafts.

This was the incident that led to the Blue Bolt becoming an outlaw and to the cross-country manhunt that left so many people dead. Kendall Biggs' widow briefly made a name for herself with her tearful, overwrought appearances on some daytime talk shows, and she parlayed her brief notoriety and her husband's contacts into a marginal career in yellow journalism. Even then she had a plan. The PCs are the first ones she has ever revealed it to. Her whole objective as a journalist has been to get enough of a reputation that a publisher might agree to take a risk on printing her book. It's a trashy tell-all biography of the Blue Bolt, full of outrageous lies that make the man seem even worse than he is. She knows that he won't be able to resist

coming out of hiding to kill her for it. And the PCs will be waiting for him. Will the Player Characters help her catch one of America's most wanted criminals? They'll be famous if they pull it off, she says. For her part, Darla doesn't mind risking her life and she doesn't much fear death. She just wants justice for her dead husband and revenge for her own ruined life. These last few years of bitter struggle, taking on wretched, sordid assignments, defaming people, screwing people over, dragging her conscience through the dirt, have been worse than anything Roadrash could do to her (alas, she's very wrong about this last point).

If the PCs agree to help Darla, she'll need around-the-clock protection as soon as she goes to her publisher and gets the project approved. She can be difficult company. Needy and self-dramatizing, she'll start seeing signs of Roadrash around every corner, long before he ever actually hears about her book.

Before the manuscript is even finished Darla comes under assault—not from the Blue Bolt himself but from the unbelievably old and powerful law firm of Bulger and Imgrund. Normally lawyers to ex-presidents and oil companies, they are one of the richest and best-connected firms in the country. What could they possibly want with this matter? How could they even know about it? They intimidate Darla's publisher, they muscle its investors, they cow her agent, and they deliver amazingly effective writs against her proceeding with the book. In fact they manage to block the project completely, and get her home and car taken away from her as well. They may

even send her to jail, in the end. But they've also left a paper trail that leads directly back to a member of the Legion of the Damned's Steering Committee, who invested a lot of time and money in recruiting the Blue Bolt. These records even seem to indicate that he was responsible for having the Blue Bolt spirited out of Federal Custody in the first place. These aren't the kind of papers you could get access to legally, but when has that ever stopped a group of Player Characters?

The home offices of Bulger and Imgrund are located in a grand old building in Philadelphia. They're equipped with enough security systems to make most supervillain lairs look paltry, but of course that just makes it an interesting challenge.

Ironically enough, they are holding one of Adolph Hitler's paintings in their vaults for a client, and if the PCs can locate the fanatical Marxist super-thief known as the Steel Phantom (see Page 110) he'll gladly assist them in breaking into the firm just to have a shot at destroying the picture.

Meanwhile, even though the book will now never be published, Roadrash finds out about it anyway. Just as the PCs get distracted from their bodyguard duties, he shows up in a rage. He'll start with a threatening phone call, which the PCs won't be present for, and then will try to run Darla down while she's driving her sister's car at night over a bridge, on her way to her new lawyer's office. If the PCs foil him, he'll lose his temper and confront them directly, forgetting about Darla until he's finished with them.

MICROBASTARD



"I've done a lot of bad stuff, you know, like murder and that. But it was never because I was actually a bad guy. I just don't like to work."

Real Name: Harry Palmer Pratt

PL: 12

Str: 24/14 (+7/+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2)

Con: 16 (+3) **Int:** 22 (+6) **Wis:** 8 (-1)

Cha: 14 (+2)

Initiative: 2

Attack Bonus: 7 (up to 19 with Shrinking bonuses) **Defense:** 8 (up to 20 with Shrinking bonuses)

Toughness Save: 5 (3 if caught Flatfooted)

Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 8

Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Bluff 7 (+9), Craft (Chemical) 10 (+16), Disable Device 1 (+7), Knowledge (Streetwise) 2 (+8), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 8 (+14), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 17 (+24), Knowledge (Popular

Culture) 2 (+8), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 1 (+7), Medicine 5 (+4), Notice 7 (+6), Sense Motive 5 (+4), Stealth 8 (+10)

Feats: Defensive Roll 2, Second Chance (Knowledge [Physical Sciences]), Skill Mastery (Craft [Chemical], Knowledge [Life Sciences], Knowledge [Physical Sciences], Knowledge [Theology and Philosophy]), Sneak Attack 4

Powers: Immunity 9 (Life Support; Flaw: Limited Power [only works when he is shrunk down to Atomic Size or in a Microverse]), Leaping 5 (Flaw: Limited Power [Can only Leap when shrunk down to Tiny size or smaller]), Shrinking 20 (Minimum Size: Miniscule; Attack/Defense Modifier: up to +12; Grapple Modifier: down to -20, Stealth Modifier: up to +20; Intimidation Modifier: down to -10; Space: 3 inches; Reach: 0 feet; Power Feats: Atomic Size, Growth Strike, Microverse [although he has never yet actually used this ability])

Extra: Normal Strength), Enhanced Strength 10 (Flaw: Limited Power [Only has Enhanced Strength when shrunk down to Diminutive size or smaller and does not have Enhanced Strength when he is in a Microverse])

Complications: Does irresponsible, impulsive things even when they endanger his team or put him at a disadvantage.

Background: Harry Palmer Pratt was dawdling his way through graduate school, taking a lot of drugs and spouting a lot of gibberish theories, when his life unexpectedly reached its heinous crescendo. He self-published an acid-fueled paper, half quantum mechanics and half Carlos Castaneda, which elucidated some pretentious idea about the shape of the universe. He doesn't know who read it, or why they took offense. He does know that someone slipped a copy under his door, heavily annotated in red ink, with certain sections crossed out and weird new equations crawling across the page.

Harry barely had time to read it—his life was in crisis again. The health food waitress he was living off of wanted him to get his act together or get out the door, he didn't have the next girl lined up just yet (although her little sister looked promising) and an old friend from California who he'd ripped off on some drugs a year or two previously had just now caught up with him and was threatening serious violence.

Harry needed some speed—that would help him think. His usual connection wouldn't give him any more credit, which was a problem. So he called this kid he knew from one of his classes, who looked up to him, like he was some kind of troubled genius (which in fact he was) and told him the loan sharks were into him bad, and the kid somehow came across with the money to pay his connection. So he got the speed. Only when he got back to his place his old buddy from California was waiting outside with a length of pipe, so he went up the fire escape. Then his girl came in all tired from work and she was mad that he was already high at eight in the morning and that he'd drunk all her vodka, but he talked her into the bedroom and handcuffed her to the bed

the way she liked, only just then he got to thinking about how he could maybe work things out with his old buddy from California. So he started to leave, but his girl threw a fit, so he put some tape over her mouth and turned up the stereo. And he didn't like the way she was looking at him, so he taped her eyes shut, too.

Then he went outside, but his friend was gone. And Harry started to think how he'd like some more vodka. So he went to get some at the liquor store, and he drank it in the park and he did some more speed to keep from getting too drowsy and he read the paper with the annotations. And it didn't make any sense, unless you juggled some of the fundamental postulates in ways that were crazy.

And some guys he knew came by and they wanted some speed and some vodka and he traded them for some acid and they went to this professor's house and the professor had some more acid and they stayed up late talking about stuff and getting high, and the professor couldn't understand his paper because a lot of the math was out of her league. They e-mailed her ex-husband who taught physics at MIT but he had the same problem.

Then Harry's old buddy from California showed up and Harry had to sneak out the toilet window without his shoes, but he took the paper with him. And it was the middle of the day somehow. And he was really tired, like he'd been up for a really long time. So he took the last of the speed, which was a mistake, because he'd only just reached the park when the acid began to hit him in a serious way. So he sat there under a tree, twitching and nuts and peaking like crazy. And he re-read the paper, and all at once he solved one of the fundamental equations that mediate all of reality. And he saw the deepest secrets of the universe. And he was everything. And he could see himself from the outside and he could see what kind of guy he really was for the first time and it hurt so bad that he would have clawed his eyes out if he could have remembered how to make his hands work.

Later he woke up crying and he could only remember one small part of the

giant equation he had seen. And he was sure that it had been some stupid drug thing, but he tried the piece he could still remember—it had to do with adjusting his size relative to the Universe. It worked. He could get really, really tiny. Maybe small enough to leave this reality altogether, which sounded like what he'd always wanted to do. But first he thought he'd go use his new powers to hurt his buddy from California.

Harry waited near his apartment, hiding in the grass, without his shoes, keeping himself about a quarter of an inch tall. And sure enough, along came his old pal with that length of pipe. And Harry did hurt him—in fact he killed the guy, which felt great, but then afterwards he realized that it had been three or four days since he'd handcuffed his girl to the bed and walked out the door. He couldn't go up there. Either she had somehow managed to get help, and she was telling the cops God knows what about him, or more likely... He didn't want to think about it. Either way he had to leave, to get away and never come back.

For a second he thought about burning the building down, but that seemed like a lot of work. So he hit the trail, a merry vagabond. He'd roll into town, find some heavy drug people to hang out with, use his shrinking powers to steal some stuff, move on when people got mad at him for screwing up or the heat got close or he had to kill somebody.

His powers made it impossible to capture and hold him. He could slip out of any cage they tried to put him in. This made it easier for him to screw up, get sloppy about stealing stuff or killing people. But being a merry vagabond is still a whole lot scarier and more dangerous than you'd think. After a couple of years he'd seen some incredibly bad stuff and he'd gotten a whole lot meaner. He was also a severely wanted man—he'd killed a superhero in Davenport, Iowa and his bad behavior was starting to make the papers in a serious way. Now nobody wanted to hang out with him and the heat was always on. He was thinking seriously about leaving this universe altogether, shrinking down until he

vanished to a mathematical point and seeing whatever lay beyond. But he couldn't imagine that whatever was on the other side would be less painful and pointless and ugly than this world. And then the Aleph found him.

These days he spends his time trying to recapture his lost theory, getting stoned and playing stupid jokes on his teammates. It's a good life, because he doesn't have to work and can sleep as much as he likes. That was always his favorite thing, sleeping. And when you're dead, you never get to do it again.

Adventures With Microbastard: 1) Microbastard is My Roomate

Microbastard critically injures a guy who once cheated him on some crank. It's a random, un-premeditated kind of crime—he just happened to run into the guy unexpectedly. They hadn't seen each other in years. By sheer luck, a Player Character is close enough to the incident when it happens that they have a shot at taking Microbastard by surprise and capturing him.

Once he's in their custody, he tells them everything. He just blurts out all his secrets, for no particular reason. He'll tell them his whole back-story, all about the inner workings of the Legion of the Damned and why they have made a big mistake by capturing him. There's really no reason not to tell them, since he expects the Legion to kill them all anyway, and probably himself, too. Harry feels lonely and wants someone to hear his story, now that it's coming to a close.

The crucial question is whether or not the PCs believe him. If they decide that this is all a load of self-serving lies and turn him over to the authorities, he vanishes from custody, along with any record of his arrest. If the PCs investigate further and try to find out how Harry Pratt was spirited away, Captain Sinister suddenly appears and gives them a stern warning to back off.

If they appear to believe Harry, then he'll beg them to protect him from the wrath of his teammates. He secretly doesn't think the PCs are up to defending him from the likes of Ultra-Woman and Doctor Zed, but he'll take any help he can get. If the PCs

attempt to hide him, they will find Harry to be exasperating, impossible company. He is forever abusing their hospitality, forever sneaking out and doing stupid stuff. Captain Sinister appears in a few days and tells the PCs to give Harry to him.

Whatever happens, the Legion doesn't actually bother to execute Harry, they just curtail his leave for a year or two. But the PCs now know about the Legion of the Damned and may be able to investigate its secrets further. Or they may get into a full-out brawl with Captain Sinister, or a biker gang who Microbastard has annoyed may follow him home to the PCs.

2) Microbastard Conquers the Universe

A mysterious shining figure appears to each of the Player Characters in a dream. It gives them some sheets of paper, gesturing at the papers as though to indicate that they are important, and then vanishes. The PCs awake to discover that they have all had the same dream. The smartest one (or the team's resident gadgeteer, if they have one) finds the sheets of paper sitting on the floor beside their bed. They appear to be pages from a cheaply printed book, 8½"/11" inches in size, in unappealing "Courier" font. The pages contain a portion of the Pratt Equations—just enough to intrigue a scientist.

After the PCs have had time to figure out what the Equations are, the figure appears to them again. This time it gives them a battered-up road atlas, with a college brochure marking one page. The tiny town of Railroad Flats, Montana, has been circled. The brochure is for Montana State University at Railroad Flats, the school's smallest and lowliest branch. There is a list of faculty members in the brochure. Someone has circled the name of Doctor Lloyd Blank, Associate Professor of Physics. (Note to the GM, if it would be tough for your PCs to get out to Montana, then Dr. Blank teaches at a crummy state university downtown in the Player Characters' home city).

Doctor Blank is a young, ambitious physicist who hasn't had enough experience to get famous yet. This may be about to change—he's uncovered a copy of Harry

Palmer Pratt's monograph and with the help of an international circle of online enthusiasts, he's halfway to deciphering it. Most members of Dr. Blank's team have never met one another in person. They communicate over the internet, giving the project what time they can spare from their official work. No one is getting paid—this is a hobby and a labor of love. None of them expect Pratt's insane theories to be true, they just like how elegantly he's worked it out. All of them have heard of the legendary Mr. Pratt and his strange life, and it's a thrill to see what he was actually working on.

Because they don't have an annotated copy to work with, the team wasn't making much headway until last month, when a new person started posting on their board. He calls himself "LittleFan" and he understands the Pratt Equations like no one else seems to be able to. With his insights, the team has suddenly been making rapid progress toward cracking some of the fundamental mysteries of the Universe. No one can seem to recall who invite LittleFan into the group, or who he (or she) is.

Here the GM has some flexibility. LittleFan is either one of the biggest and most dangerous master villains in your game universe, or else it's Harry Palmer Pratt himself. Do whichever would be most convenient for your campaign.

Dr. Blank has been scribbling notes in the margins of his copy of the monograph, and these will eventually become the mysterious annotations that Harry saw on the copy that someone slipped under his door. How will the annotated copy go back in time to reach him? Read on.

The Legion of the Damned knows what kind of impact the Pratt Equations could have on society. Dr. Blank and his whole circle must die before the infection spreads any further.

By the time the PCs get to Railroad Flats (or get downtown, as the case may be) Blank's friends have already started to disappear. Dr. Morgan Jarrunthaya of the University of New Delhi vanishes without a trace from a crowded terrace at a faculty party in the suburbs. Then a Caltech

physicist named Dr. Bernard Epstein goes missing on hiking trail in Redwood National Park. Then the beautiful young mathematical genius Ping-Ping Wu disappears from the secret aerospace lab outside of Tsing Tao where she works in theoretical design. The circumstances of her disappearance are being kept quiet, but the Chinese Government is grumbling ominously about western supervillains being allowed to carry out attacks on Chinese soil.

By the time the PCs reach Dr. Blank, he's ready to panic. And panic he does. When mysterious folks in capes turn up at his office, he does his level best to flee. An avid mountain biker, he's in excellent shape for a fat man, and his bulk doesn't slow him down much as he runs. He's equipped with a can of mace and any improvised weapons (fire extinguishers, office chairs, staplers) he can lay hands on while running away. Improvise a chase scene, make him a wily opponent. Here are some stats for him.

Dr. Blank

PL: 6

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3)
Con: 14 (+2) **Int:** 20 (+5)
Wis: 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 2
Fortitude Save: 6
Reflexes Save: 6
Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Concentration 6 (+9), Computers 7 (+12), Craft (chemical) 6 (+11), 2nd Craft Skill (electronic) 7 (+11), Knowledge (physical sciences) 7 (+11), Knowledge (technology) 9 (+14), Notice 4 (+7), Profession (scientist) 7 (+12)

Feats: Beginner's Luck, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Skill Mastery, (both of his Craft Skills, and both of his Knowledge Skills), Ultimate Effort, Well-Informed

In the middle of the chase, the Screaming Shrike shows up and tries to kill Dr. Blank. She was going to do it subtly, but once she sees superheroes chasing him around campus she reluctantly decides that the time for subtlety is past.

Stopping the Screaming Shrike will go a long way towards winning Dr. Blank's

trust. When he's caught and the PCs have a chance to explain that they're not here to kill him, he recovers his poise and tells them the whole story.

Dr. Blank is fun to hang around with, clever, witty and brave. An African American inner-city kid, he got this far with nothing but talent, moxie and a lot of hard work—exactly the kind of person you'd want by your side in a crisis. For an overweight PL 6 academic, he's not even that bad in a fight. Not that any of this will save him once the Legion of the Damned comes knocking on his door.

Doctor Blank knows everything there is to know about Harry Palmer Pratt (except for the really secret stuff). Pratt's legend has always fascinated him. He has spoken with Dr. Jane Ritter, the physics professor whose house Pratt was partying at the day he went on the run and she has told Blank more about the events of that day than anyone else has ever heard. Dr. Blank even suspects that Pratt became the supervillain known as Microbastard.

If the PCs don't yet know about the Pratt Equations and how someone shoved an annotated copy under Harry's door on the morning his life fell apart, Dr. Blank will tell them (he heard it from Jane Ritter). Dr. Blank shows the PCs his copy of the Pratt Equations and suddenly the smartest PC present has a penetrating insight into one part of the math (the GM should make a dummy roll for each PC as they look at the text, and when the most brilliant character in the room examines it, look surprised and tell them that they've cracked a little portion of the math).

Dr. Blank eagerly writes their observation down in the margin of the text. Clearly someone or something doesn't want the Pratt Equations solved. Dr. Blank tells the PCs where to find the rest of his team (except of course for the mysterious "LittleFan"). They will have to race around the globe to stop the Legion of the Damned from killing them all.

A different member of the Legion has been assigned to terminate each one of Dr. Blank's confederates. The Bowhunter has been sent up to the cabin of Dr. Boris Zhuganov, a hale and hearty 85-year old

professor of theoretical physics at the University of Magnetogorsk, deep inside the Russian Republic.

John Thunder has been sent after Henrietta Higginsbottham, wheelchair-bound guest lecturer in mathematics and cosmology at Oxford. She lives on a huge rambling country estate owned by her late husband's family, with a private nurse and a devoted family servant or two.

The Black Sun is supposed to kill a science author and cable TV personality named Jun Takeshiro at his Tokyo apartment. Protecting this target is going to be especially tricky, Takeshiro is a crazy, arrogant wild-man who practices kendo and jujitsu obsessively. At PL 4 he's absolutely not up to fighting the Black Sun, but he thinks he is. Takeshiro seldom had anything useful to contribute to the group, but they let him post anyway in hopes that he might do a show on their efforts.

Celestial Fist of Harmony is sent to kill Benny Belczek, an unemployed and mildly autistic former mathematics lecturer who lives with his parents in a run-down part of Cicero, Illinois.

Most members of the Legion of the Damned haven't had a chance to kill normal people like this in a long time, and they're having a great time rediscovering the thrill. The last target on the list is LittleFan. No one knows who or where he is. Then, he suddenly contacts the Player Characters.

What happens next depends on LittleFan's identity. If LittleFan's a major world-conquering supervillain, he tells the PCs that he doesn't need their protection but that he appreciates the thought. He then tells them where to find Harry Palmer Pratt. He tells them to bring the Pratt Equations—they'll need them. If they ask him who is trying to kill Dr. Blank and his associates, the villain explains who and what the Legion of the Damned actually is. If they ask how he knows where Harry Pratt is hiding, he pauses, and then says in a more subdued tone of voice that a shining figure showed it to him in a dream.

If on the other hand the GM has decided that Harry Pratt is LittleFan himself, he calls them up, explains who he is and where to find him. He's sick of working for

the Legion of the Damned and he'd like to see if maybe he could work something out with the PCs. In either case he's staying at a shabby Motel 6 outside of Railroad Flats.

Meanwhile, Captain Sinister gets wind of Harry's treachery and he shows up hot on the PCs' heels. He brings Ultra-Woman with him if the PCs are a really tough group.

When the PCs reach Pratt he greets them, wonders aloud if he should kill them and then gets totally engrossed in the paper. If they ask him about the Legion of the Damned or his own past while he's distracted by the paper, he'll absent-mindedly tell them the truth about anything they might want to know. When he reaches the place where one of the PCs contributed an insight, Pratt stands up and yells *"I get it now!"*

Here Captain Sinister tears the roof off the building. *"Oh you will most certainly get it!"* he sneers.

Pratt pays no attention to Captain Sinister. He says *"Of course, that's the part I didn't see."*

And all at once he becomes everything, at one with the cosmos. He is transformed into the shining figure that the PCs saw in their dreams. The figure announces *"Now I'd better go back in time and put the paper under my door. Then, infinity calls, I guess"*. He vanishes, forever.

Captain Sinister stands there with his mouth open for a moment, then he laughs. There's no mission for him here anymore. He tells the PCs *"Well, how fortunate for you."* Then he leaves.

THE BLACK SUN



"Some days I get up and I just want to crush the whole world. But most days I don't bother to get up at all."

Real Name: Eddie Payton

PL: 15

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 16 (+3)

Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 10

Defense: 8 **Toughness Save:** 3 (17 with Force Field, including 10 Impervious)

Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 7

Willpower Save: 0

Skills: Computers 3 (+6), Craft (Electronics) 3 (+6), Intimidate 7 (+9), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 6 (+7), Knowledge (Technology) 4 (+7), Notice 3 (+2), Pilot 6 (+8), Profession (Astronaut) 4 (+7), Profession (Engineer) 5 (+8)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Chokehold, Power Attack

Powers: Flight 10 (Maximum Speed: 10,000 mph, Force-Field 14 (Extra: 10 Impervious), Gravity Control 16 (Power

Feats: Alternate Powers [Blast, Telekinesis, Snare], Super Senses (Detect Gravity Fields)

Complications: Really, really depressed.

Background: Eddie Payton and Bill Ritter were friends from earliest childhood, growing up in wealthy Shaker Heights, Ohio. Or at least that's how Ed remembers it. Bill was weak and sickly, Eddie was big and strong. Eddie stuck up for Bill when he wasn't bullying him. No one could torment Bill but Eddie. He got his weak little friend to do all kinds of stuff, as much from affection as fear.

In high school Bill's asthma got better. He started lifting weights and talked about joining the track team. Eddie would have none of this—Bill was supposed to be the smart one, the little science nerd. Eddie was supposed to be the strong, popular one. It already annoyed him enough that Bill was growing taller than he was. So he undercut Bill and discouraged him from pursuing athletics as much as possible, and after a while it worked.

But a funny thing happened Junior Year. Eddie discovered that he could actually make better friends by picking on Bill and humiliating him in public. Friends who were on the teams and could get him into the best parties where they had cocaine and cheerleaders. So their friendship turned sour and ugly.

By the time they both went off to college neither one expected to see the other again. But sometimes Eddie got in touch, when he was feeling down or lonely or needed someone to condescend to. He was at least as good at math as Bill was and got a degree in electrical engineering with no difficulty. He went in for ROTC, liked it and became a career Air Force officer. Bill, he was gratified to note, was still stuck in grad school at Princeton, probably on his way to some crummy teaching job.

Ed made fighter pilot and did so well at it that he eventually became the youngest astronaut in the space program. He went on a mission that orbited the moon, got his name in the papers, got interviewed by Conan O'Brien, and got a sweet little blonde wife who was as pretty and dumb as he had always wanted. NASA didn't give him any

more missions for a couple of years, so on the advice of his press agent he left the space program and tried to get some acting jobs. He did get some walk-on roles on a couple of sit-coms. And then it was over. His life had peaked at the age of 26. His wife was getting pretty disappointed with him and the Air Force didn't seem to have anything too glamorous lined up for him if he re-joined—nothing like being an astronaut, anyway. He got a job with an aerospace firm, but it was boring and tedious and he didn't pay much attention to it.

As his marriage and career fell apart Ed found himself thinking more and more about Bill Ritter. Bill didn't show up for their tenth high school reunion and Ed realized how much he missed the guy. After some digging he found out how to get in touch with Bill and what he'd been up to. Ed didn't like what he heard. Bill had indeed gone on to a teaching job—at MIT! He'd finished his doctorate in physics at Princeton by the age of 24, and had found time to captain their rowing team. Tall, handsome and well-liked, he had lucrative consulting contracts with Ed's own aerospace firm, and he was on his second wife, who was younger and prettier than Ed's own spouse. This would not do.

Ed came out to visit the Ritters in Massachusetts, and found that underneath his smooth exterior Bill was as intimidated by him as ever. This was gratifying, but Ed found to his shock and dismay that Bill's wife simply would not cheat on him. Not even with an astronaut. He went home to the wreckage of his own life dispirited and crestfallen.

A year later, after Ed lost his job and his wife got the house and his daughters, he wound up living on Bill's couch. Ed really thought he had hit bottom, living life as Bill's loser buddy—even if it was still fun to intimidate the guy. Later he would come to realize that there is no bottom, not really. Not while we're still alive.

Bill was just on the point of working up his nerve to throw his loathsome old chum out of the house, when he got an amazing e-mail from his ex-wife Jane in

Michigan. Bill had heard rumors for years about a lunatic, drug-addled genius named Harry Palmer Pratt (who later became the supervillain named "Microbastard"—see the entry on Page 238). Pratt was supposedly a useless self-destructive wretch, yet had the kind of innate mathematical talent that comes along only once a century or so. Pratt was real, Jane had met him—in fact he was there in her house right now.

Jane was a mathematics professor at Michigan State, and while she had never seen the legendary Mr. Pratt in any of her classes, he had just shown up at her door one day with a bunch of grad students who Jane sometimes smoked dope with. He had this amazing, self-published monograph, covered in weird annotations by someone Pratt wouldn't name. The thing was incredible, it seemed to describe the fundamental mathematical basis of all reality. She knew that Bill didn't trust her, that he disapproved of her lifestyle and that they weren't on speaking terms, but would he please take a look at this thing? The math was way beyond her level.

Dr. Ritter knew that Jane was a wild child and an irresponsible stoner—that was what drew him to her in the first place and what had broken them up. But when he saw the document she faxed him, all his doubts vanished. Partly written by the semi-legendary Harry Palmer Pratt, but annotated and corrected by someone even more brilliant, in between long passages of sloppy writing and drug-addled mysticism, it did indeed appear to contain a set of equations that model and underlie all reality. Even Bill couldn't handle all the math, but he felt that with time and a big enough supercomputer, he might be able to master it.

Not that he would have stolen Pratt's work. As hopeless and rotten as Harry Pratt was reported to be, Bill actually wanted to help him, work with him, maybe even get the guy's life back on track, if that was possible. But instead Pratt disappeared, wanted by the police for some awful drug-fueled crime.

Bill took a leave of absence from his ongoing projects and dedicated himself to decrypting the Pratt Equations. He was so

absorbed in this work that he forgot to throw Ed off his couch—a serious error. After a few months of torturous, brain-punishing work, and after wracking up far too many hours on MIT's supercomputers, he finally had a breakthrough with one small portion of the math. It was the part that described the way gravity functions. The practical applications could change the world. This was a discovery on a par with electromagnetism. Giddy with joy, desperate to tell someone about his discovery, Bill confided the news in his old pal Ed, who listened with growing dismay. Bill even went so far as to outline the simple but unobvious way to build a gravity control module.

Ed was a trained electrical engineer and immediately understood what Bill was trying to describe. Bill was going to be a star. Not Ed, but Bill. So Ed strangled Bill with a coat hanger and took the plans for the gravity control module. Bill's wife came home while he was trying to work out what to do next, and he tried to restrain her to keep her from calling the cops, but something went wrong and she died too.

It took Ed no more than a week to make a gravity control rod in Bill's basement workshop. It was actually really simple, once you knew the trick of it.

And then the remorse started to hit Ed. He had killed his best friend, his only friend left in the world. And why? How could he have let the worthless little weasel get to him that way? He was all mixed up. But he was quite sure that he wanted to die. And that he wanted to be famous. And that he wanted everyone to think that he, Ed Payton, Boy Astronaut, had invented the gravity rod. So he made himself a costume, one that didn't cover his face, took the gravity rod, imploded the Ritters' house and went on a cross-country rampage. He attacked reservoirs and electrical generating plants and other targets where he could attract a lot of attention without actually killing too many people. Superheroes tried to stop him, the Army and the Air Force tried to kill him, but to Ed's surprise he was obscenely powerful and they all failed. Then the Aleph caught him.

To this day the Black Sun's

mysterious rampage and subsequent disappearance are the stuff of legend. Everyone knows that he was an embittered astronaut who somehow found a way to control gravity, an American hero gone hideously wrong, but reports vary as to how he gained his powers and what happened to him. Was he the product of a secret government lab? Did NASA send him on a classified mission where he retrieved some unbelievably powerful alien artifact? Only a few people scattered around the country suspect the truth, and they only have portions of it.

After hanging around with the Legion of the Damned for a while, Ed actually met his fellow Legionnaire Harry Palmer Pratt, who was glad to share some of his insights into the Pratt Equations over a bong-load or two (or twelve). Now Ed doesn't need the gravity rod anymore, he can simply work the equations in his head.

Monumentally depressed, Ed has stopped cutting his hair and takes very poor care of himself. He's so unhappy that Hellraven and/or Vulture Man sometimes hang around him to bask in his misery. Too consumed with self-pity and too much of a bully to feel any sympathy for anyone else, he's squeamish about murder but he'll do it if he has to.

Ed desperately wants redemption and he's the most likely member of the Legion to attempt to betray the group. Player Characters who try to work with the Black Sun will find him to be a terrible ally, unreliable, unstable, alternately bullying and maudlin. He's also prone to savage jealousy, as his personal history shows. Worst of all, he might decide to be your friend.

Adventures With the Black Sun: 1) Black Sun and Burning Joy

The Brotherhood of the Blazing Wound is a strange relic of the long-lost Russian Imperial epoch. A cult of decadent pain-freaks from the highest levels of the aristocracy, they sought transcendent bliss and secret wisdom through agony. Czar Alexander II exiled them all to the prison colony on the frigid isles of Novya Zemlya, where they all should have died within a

year. Instead they thrived there, relishing the pain and cold. Soon they found the secret knowledge they had sought, and they still revere Czar Alexander to this day for having given them the chance.

The Brotherhood claims that three black monks appeared to them out of the frigid waste and taught them the esoteric mutilations and plangent cruelties that open up the portals of the mind. Whether or not this story holds even a shred of truth, the present-day Brotherhood really does possess some secret technique for awakening psionic powers. Every member of the Brotherhood has Psi and all of their leaders are extremely powerful mentalists.

They used to recruit new members from the Novya Zemlya prison camps, but when the Soviet Union fell, the camps closed and their recruitment pool dried up. This may doom them to slow extinction, but they are untroubled by it.

For they have just completed their grand master project—the Temple of Violent Serenity, a monument to pain unequalled in the world. It's a kind of loose, open-sided building, made from scavenged construction materials, with living members of the Brotherhood woven into its framework. Part monastery, part psionic amplifier, part living work of art, every one of its chambers is equipped with hooks and blades and wires and edges that can satisfy a disciple's lust for pain in a hundred different ways.

The Temple of Violent Serenity is located in a frigid valley in the interior of Novya Zemlya's desolate north island. There are no other human encampments for hundreds of miles in any direction. While the Temple is big enough to show up on satellite photos (it's about the size of a shopping mall) it doesn't look like any conventional kind of military installation, so no one has ever tried to investigate what it might be. The Brotherhood prefers to have this kind of isolation, for they don't like non-believers looking at their temple and guessing their secrets.

The Legion of the Damned's Steering Committee knows about the Brotherhood's existence. They regard it as a trivial aberration that should never be allowed to contaminate the mainstream

culture, but that would take too much work to destroy unless it becomes a threat. This assessment may be about to change.

Captain Sinister is picking up odd psychic emanations from Novya Zemlya, and it is clear from the satellite photos that the Brotherhood has just completed some kind of huge, long-term construction project. The Temple's design is so eccentric that it's hard to say what it might be used for. The Legion Dispatches the Black Sun to go investigate. It's a recon mission, hard to screw up, but Ed manages to turn it into a disaster anyway. While resting up for the night at a hotel in St. Petersburg he gets recognized by the Russian police. They track him north to Arkhangel, where he briefly engages them in a running battle, before flying abruptly off to the north.

Word reaches the Player Characters that one of the world's most elusive and mysterious supervillains, the Black Sun, has reportedly been sighted in northern Russia. Everyone assumed he was dead, or had vanished back to wherever he appeared from, yet here he is on a hotel security camera, being cautiously watched by the Russian security services. As the PCs head to Russia to investigate, the police catch up with the Black Sun in Arkhangel and he fights them off. The trail has turned hot! The PCs find dozens of witnesses of the fight in Arkhangel who saw the Black Sun fly north out over the sea. It's easy to pinpoint where he was going. He left maps of Novya Zemlya behind in his hotel room. He even had an area on the north island circled, with a question mark over it. There are some very odd satellite photos as well, which seem to show some freaky-looking structure, part building, part radio antenna, part modern art sculpture. Let the PCs find his maps and satellite photos before the authorities do.

Meanwhile, Ed has managed to screw the mission up even worse. He flies too close to the Temple of Violent Serenity and gets captured. He's far more powerful than any member of the Brotherhood, but he doesn't have very good psychic defenses.

These are very bad guys to be captured by, although they would never physically torture a captive (unbelievers

don't deserve to have any of their glorious pain—that's for members only). They begin to peel Ed's mind like an onion.

The PCs arrive shortly thereafter and almost certainly get overwhelmed and captured themselves. While they are being questioned inside the Temple of Violent Serenity, it becomes clear that there is a growing faction of the Brotherhood who are taking an interest in the outside world. These young turks feel that now that the Temple is complete, the organization needs a new great purpose, and that the best one would be to share their message and credo with the world. Soon everyone will come to know and embrace the paradise of suffering, the joy and rapture of pain!

The Black Sun is imprisoned next to the PCs, and he'll be only too happy to ally himself with them in order to escape. He may even share a few enigmatic hints about his own secrets, although he'll never mention the Legion of the Damned by name. It would be a good idea for the PCs to accept his offer and do their best to escape as soon as they can. For Captain Sinister (and perhaps Ultra-Woman) will soon swoop down out of the sky to resolve this matter once and for all. The PCs may well find themselves in a hellish alliance with the Legion of the Damned against the Brotherhood of the Blazing Wound.

At first this is just a rescue mission. However, once he realizes that the Brotherhood may have plans that involve contaminating the outside world with their ideas, Captain Sinister will reluctantly reach the conclusion that it's time for the Brotherhood to become extinct. He always kind of admired them, but now they've gone too far and they all must die, along with anyone who may have come into psychic contact with them (the Player Characters, for example). He'll make an exception for the Black Sun and try to root any lingering taint out of his mind later—the man is just too useful to execute arbitrarily. The PCs can expect Captain Sinister to wait until after they've helped him defeat the Brotherhood of the Blazing Wound before he turns on them. He's nothing if not reasonable.

If the tide of battle starts to go

against the Player Characters and their unlikely allies, reinforcements start to arrive from the Legion of the Damned. Some of these people, like Microbastard and the Blue Bolt, are wanted criminals who most PCs may recognize. What are they doing all working together like this?

For his part, the Black Sun will experience an infrequent pang of conscience and try to warn the PCs that they're going to be killed after the mission. He quietly hopes that he will be executed too, but he's going to be disappointed again.

2) Black Sun Rising in the West

Bill Ritter's ex-wife Jane has always been curious about what happened to him. She's been trying to investigate the matter herself. Jane has never heard of Ed Payton (Bill was out of touch with him for the whole time they were married and didn't like talking about him) and the police have been unwilling to share any details of their investigation with her, so there are some crucial pieces of the mystery that have always remained outside her grasp.

Jane is no longer a research scientist or a lecturer—her lifestyle gave her a bad reputation and she hasn't been able to find a job in her field for years. She has retreated to her family's old farmhouse in Montana (or some other rural location, closer to your player characters), rented some rooms out to students and devoted herself to the search full time. Jane no longer has a copy of Harry Pratt's monograph, but she has reconstructed a few bits of it from the e-mails she sent Bill. She only has a dial-up internet connection, but she's been making surprisingly good progress so far.

Word reaches the PCs that a maverick scientist in Montana (or wherever you decide to place Jane's farmhouse) is trying to duplicate the experiments that led to the Black Sun disaster back in the mid '90s. Most PCs will want to investigate this right away, but if they don't, have someone in authority ask them to.

Meanwhile, the Legion of the Damned has also learned what Jane Ritter is up to, and they send the Black Sun to stop her. Ed Payton protests that this is

Harry Pratt's mess to clean up, not his, but the Core Command Working Group won't listen to him. So he resentfully sets about the mission, grumbling and depressed.

Jane lives well outside of town and her neighbors don't like her. If the PCs ask about Jane, the locals tell them that she runs a weird hippie cult up at her house, and that no one around here would go up there after dark. This is nonsense, but it may affect the way the PCs react to what they find when they reach Jane's sloppy, disorganized home.

The house itself is big and drafty, with an overgrown yard and some goofy experimental sculpture on the porch. The PCs arrive just slightly too late to avert a tragedy. For the Black Sun has been there first. Ed was so depressed that he did a very bad job, and instead of killing Jane he killed one of her housemates who resembles her. Jane has fled in a panic and the Black Sun has taken off in pursuit.

When the PCs arrive, they find that Dr. Ritter has vanished and one of her housemates has died from a seven hundred foot fall, even though there's nothing that tall for a hundred miles in any direction. Most Player Characters will probably assume that Jane has duplicated the experiment which gave the Black Sun his powers, killed her tenant with them as a test and is even now planning who-knows what kind of evil mischief. Inside the cluttered house, the PCs can find her notes (as well as a modest amount of drug paraphernalia) and if they read them they can figure out what really happened here. However, the notes are lengthy and disorganized, so the PCs probably won't figure out that she's innocent until just before they catch her.

Jane is easy enough to spot—she's a lean, tanned, rugged looking woman in her late forties, driving a painstakingly well-maintained 1972 Volkswagen Beetle. She will try to explain herself to the PCs when they catch up with her (and she isn't above flirting with the more attractive males in the group, especially if they're under the age of 23 or so) but there won't be much time for lengthy explanations. The Black Sun has already appeared in the distance and he'll attack at any second. If the PCs make a

reasonable effort at fighting him he'll abruptly break off the combat and fly away. He's going to a nearby dam, to knock it down and flood the whole valley. This seems to him like an easier way to kill Jane than grappling with the PCs. If the PCs don't stop him, hundreds of people are going to die.

JOHN THUNDER



"They say a long time ago the white man came and took the hills, the grass, the sky away from us. Which don't mean a crap to me. Let him have it! Stupid hills. Lousy sky."

Real Name: John Thunder

PL: 13

Str: 46 (Includes bonus from Growth) (+18)
Dex: 14 (+2) **Con:** 44 (+17) **Int:** 14 (+2)
Wis: 12 (+1) **Cha:** 6 (-2)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 9 (Includes Penalty from Growth)
Defense: 7 (Includes Penalty from Growth)
Toughness Save: 17 (12 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 17 **Reflexes Save:** 2
Willpower Save: 5

Skills: Craft (Mechanical) 6 (+8), Intimidate

10 (+8), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 4 (+5), Notice 8 (+9), Profession (car repair) 7 (+9), Survival 12 (+13)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Chokehold, Endurance, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Startle, Tracking

Powers: Growth 4 (Size: Huge; Attack Modifier: -2, Defense Modifier: -2; Grapple Modifier: 8; Stealth Modifier: -8; Intimidation Modifier: 4; Space: 15 feet; Reach: 10 feet; Extra: Innate; Flaw: Permanent), Impervious Toughness 12, Super-Strength 10 (Maximum Lift: 12.5 thousand tons; Power Feats: Shockwave, Thunderclap)

Equipment: Rebreather and air tanks (Immunity to Suffocation)

Background: Not exactly a gentle giant, John Thunder has always had a bottomless thirst for violence. A quiet, huge and brutal man, he once was a quiet, huge and brutal child.

His mother died giving birth to him, which is hardly surprising, since he weighed 22 pounds. He grew up on the Lakota Reservation in the indifferent care of his older sister, her boyfriend and as many other members of the family as happened to be around. He pulled the head off his pet dog when he was three and has been taunted about it ever since.

Kids teased him a lot about his size all through his childhood and he quietly soaked up their abuse. Every now and then one would get within his reach and he'd mangle them good, but it never stopped the others from teasing him.

He never spoke much, never had much to say. He saw a lot of bad things on the reservation as a boy, a lot of crime, poverty and hopelessness. Another kind of boy might have been filled with indignation or a desire to help his people. John Thunder felt nothing but a vague need to get away from it. By the time he was eleven he had grown so big and ugly that he could easily pass for an adult, so he went to Bismarck, North Dakota and attempted to make his fortune.

He worked as a bouncer in a bar and grill, but didn't have the emotional

maturity to keep his temper in check and killed a rowdy patron or two. Then, knowing he'd be thrown in jail for manslaughter, he hung around Bismark's darkened streets and crushed stuff at random until the cops caught up with him. He was already a lot stronger than any human being, and could have smashed his way past the cops, but he figured they'd send the superheroes in to stop him if he resisted arrest, so instead he gave jail a try.

No one believed he was only 11, so he got sent to a maximum security penitentiary in Sioux Falls, Idaho. During a prison brawl it became clear that he was a superhuman, so they transferred him to a metahuman containment unit that was even worse.

At the age of twenty he came out of prison a whole lot quieter and meaner than when he went in. He wanted to stay away from people, so he moved to the most remote part of the Lakota reservation and spent his time wrestling bears and elk in the wilderness. He soon became a local legend—an evil giant who stalked the hills at night, snapping trees in half and grinding boulders into dust, making the mountains shake.

He has a Quonset-hut shack, but for the most part he sleeps outside, wherever the mood strikes him. When he needs more money he comes down from the hills and finds work at gas stations, fixing cars (a skill he picked up in prison).

Native American radical groups have approached him more than once to enlist him in their cause. He always smiles agreeably, says nothing and then betrays them to the authorities.

The Aleph somehow heard about this legendary figure and sought him out. The two of them wrestled for a long time, and while John Thunder lost, the Aleph was impressed with his absolute refusal to give up. He asked that the sullen giant be made an Auxiliary Member of the team. The Steering Committee doesn't like John Thunder (ethnic prejudice seems to play a role in this) and they seldom call on him. This suits him fine. He'd rather stay up in the hills and mutilate big animals than go out on missions anyway.

Yet signing on with the Legion has made him start to take an interest in the outside world again. It is possible that if another supervillain approached him with a plan for a big crime, he'd feel restless enough to give it a try.

John is soft-spoken, withdrawn and prone to impulsive acts of savagery. He seems laid back and smiles a lot, but there is always violence lurking just under his exterior. He sometimes tells sly, ironic jokes. If he does it without prompting, look out—it's a sure sign that he's about to go berserk. He's not a good reader, but he has had a lot of time to himself and has absorbed a surprising number of the world's great books. He might even be willing to talk to superheroes about them, although this won't stop him from trying to do them harm. Beowulf, Gilgamesh, the Iliad and Plato's Critias are his favorites.

The Aleph had a costume made up for him and he keeps it in his Quonset hut, ready for use. He's secretly proud of his uniform and it's the only thing he owns that he takes good care of. In combat he's direct and not particularly cunning. It's not so much that he's incapable of thinking up a clever strategy as it is that he doesn't care enough to bother. Maybe he'll win the fight, maybe he'll lose—it's all one to him. If he were in a situation where something he cared about were at stake (although it's hard to think what that would be) he would show a lot more tactical finesse.

He's painfully aware of the fact that his invulnerability doesn't protect him from things like drowning or poison gas, so he wears a stolen aqualung and rebreather whenever he goes on a mission, to protect his air supply. It looks kind of silly but that doesn't bother him. He has a phobia about drowning and has never been a good swimmer.

While taunts about his size and ugliness don't bother him anymore, remarks about his baldness still get under his skin more than he cares to admit. He's always been completely hairless and this has caused him more grief and attracted more teasing than anything else about him. Don't call him "baldy", ever.

Adventures With John Thunder:

1) All Fun and Games Until Somebody Shoots an Eye Out

Word reaches the PCs of a running battle between two superhumans, off in the most remote corner of an Indian reservation. The fight has been going on for days—it looks as though they are hunting each other through the wilderness, clashing briefly whenever one catches the other. No one seems to know who they are or why they're fighting. Even though this is a remote area, the tribal authorities are worried about collateral damage. Only the fact that so few people live out there has kept anyone from getting seriously injured by the fight.

The tribal council doesn't want to call in the state or federal authorities. It will upset people if federal troops show up on Indian land. Instead they go to a group of independent superheroes (the PCs) and ask them if they can intervene with the battling titans.

If the PCs accept their request and go out to North Dakota, they will find the two superhumans difficult to track down. Both of them seem to be adept woodsmen, although one of them is so big and heavy that he leaves tracks which are hard to conceal.

When the PCs catch up with either combatant, they will learn the whole story. The Bowhunter has paid John Thunder to let him hunt him for sport. John Thunder is a trickier quarry than the Bowhunter expected, for he knows these hills intimately well and he's used to hiding in them when he has to. They've clashed inconclusively a half-dozen times so far and they're going to keep it up until one of them dies or the Bowhunter gets bored. Neither one has any regard for any civilians who might get caught in the crossfire.

If Captain Sinister finds out about this, he's going to be annoyed. In fact, while the Bowhunter is too well-connected for him to move against directly, he might just let the Aleph know what's going on. The Aleph likes John Thunder, Captain Sinister thinks, and he might get mad enough to finally do something drastic about the Bowhunter.

2) The Zorbin File

One of the Steering Committee's less scrupulous members sends John Thunder out on a truly dastardly mission.

There is a biotech firm called the Zorbin Group, which has its main research campus in the suburbs outside of Albuquerque. They work for the Department of Defense on a semi-formal contract basis, making biological weapons, and have a number of nasty killer viruses brewing in their vats at any given time. The Department of Defense uses a security contractor called "Brite Consultations, Inc." to protect the site.

The campus itself looks like a bland, nondescript collection of low brown buildings in an institutional style. It could be a small college or an office park, except for the fifteen-foot brick wall that surrounds it and the armed guards at the gate. No sign identifies the campus, none of the buildings have names or address numbers.

The member of the Steering Committee who has taken an interest in the Zorbin Group owns another security firm called Norax Ltd. He thinks that if he sends a supervillain to kill all the security staff on the premises and unleash a minor outbreak of some bio-weapon, it will make Brite Consultations look bad and give Norax Ltd. the edge in bidding on future security contracts.

It is strictly against the rules for members of the Steering Committee to use the Legion of the Damned this way. If he were protecting his own business interests that would be one thing, but using the Legion to lean on a competitor is something else again. For this reason, he has selected John Thunder, the team's most distant and loosely affiliated member, as his agent.

He should have thought this through better. John Thunder isn't capable of pulling off something with this much finesse. He won't be able to tell which biological agent to unleash or how to spread it effectively, he'll just smash everything and cause who-knows what kind of crisis. Fortunately, he checks in with Captain Sinister to ask about some of the mission's details. Captain Sinister senses that there is something wrong with this assignment (why

wasn't he told about it before?), but he judges it unsafe to get embroiled in what might be some internal political conflict on the Steering Committee, so he doesn't order John Thunder to abort the mission. Instead he leaks the details to the PCs. They have to intercept and stop the gigantic thug before he can smash open the germ warfare lab. He's determined to prove himself with this assignment and he won't give up easily.

Once all the dust settles from the battle, there is an internal investigation by the Steering Committee, and their wayward member is disciplined (they poison all the birds in his private aviary).

Brite Consultations Security

Goon

PL: 6

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 5 (+1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Drive 3 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+5), Medicine 2 (+3), Knowledge (Tactics) 5 (+5), Notice 6 (+7), Sense Motive 4 (+5), Stealth 5 (+6)

Feats: Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment)

Equipment: Body Armor (5 Toughness), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire]), Tonfa (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage)

Powered Armor Security Goon

PL: 6

Str: 14/26 (With Armor) (+2/+8)
Dex: 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 16 (+3)
Wis: 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 1/8 (With Armor)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Bluff 5 (+6), Craft (Electronics) 3 (+6), Craft (Mechanical) 4 (+7), Disable Device 5 (+8), Intimidate 7 (+8), Knowledge (Technology) 3 (+6), Notice 5 (+6), Profession (Soldier) 7 (+10), Search 5 (+6), Sense Motive 3 (+4)

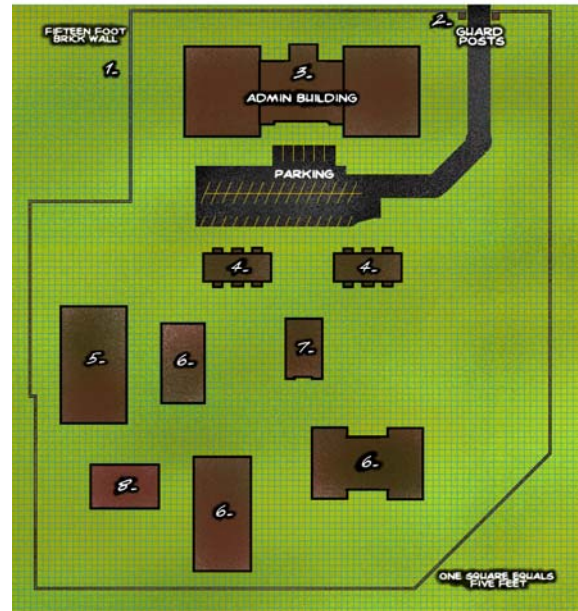
Feats: Improved Grapple, Power Attack

Powers: Device 18 (Battlesuit; Blast 8

[Power Feats: Alternate Power (Enhanced Strength +12)], Communication [Radio, one-mile radius], Immunity 9 [Life Support], Protection 7 [Impervious], Super-Senses 6 [Darkvision, Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Time Sense], Super-Strength 5)

Drawback: Normal Identity (takes a full round to don the suit, -4 pts)

THE ZORBIN FACILITY



A Brief Guide to the Zorbin Facility

- 1) This specially reinforced fifteen-foot high brick wall has a Toughness of 15.
- 2) Guard Posts. Toughness 15, manned around the clock by two guards each.
- 3) Main Administrative Building. Walls are Toughness 12. Contains offices, as well as the staff cafeteria.
- 4) Staff Dormitories. Walls are Toughness 12. Few staff actually live here.
- 5) Security Center. Walls are Toughness 15. Also includes workshops for powered-armor repair and a basement detention facility.
- 6) Hot Labs. Walls are Toughness 15. High-security labs where dangerous bio-weapons are made. John Thunder's primary target.
- 7) Cold Labs. Low-level, less dangerous research takes place here.
- 8) Physical Plant. Houses generators, water purification system, also used for storage.

CELESTIAL FIST OF HARMONY



"Taste deeply of the bounteous wisdom found in pain. See how I lavish this dharma upon you!"

Real Name: Wing-Yan "Johnny" Fong
PL: 15

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 24 (+7) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 19 **Attack Bonus** (Melee): 19
Attack Bonus (Ranged): 13
Defense: 13 (5 if unable to dodge)
Toughness Save: 12 (4 if unable to dodge) **Fortitude Save:** 10
Reflexes Save: 16 **Willpower Save:** 13

Skills: Concentration 10 (+13), Intimidate 16 (+18), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 5 (+7), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 6 (+8), Languages (Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Tibetan, Vietnamese), Notice 12 (+15), Sense Motive 10 (+13), Stealth 16 (+23), Survival 16 (+23)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Assessment, Attack Focus (Melee) 6, Blind-Fight, Defensive Attack,

Defensive Roll 10, Distract (linked to Intimidate), Dodge Focus, Elusive Target, Defensive Roll, Evasion 2, Grappling Finesse, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Critical (With Strike), Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative 3, Improved Overrun, Improved Pin, Improved Sunder, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Ranged Pin, Redirect, Sneak Attack 5, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Throwing Mastery 4, Tracking, Trance, Uncanny Dodge 3 (Visual, Auditory, Smell), Weapon Bind, Weapon Break

Powers: Deflect 15 (Works on arrows, thrown objects and bullets, but not on energy blasts; Extras: Action, Redirection), Healing 6, Leaping 5, Strike 10 (Extra: Mighty), Super-Senses 2 (Acute hearing, Low-Light Vision)

Background: They say a master is judged by the quality of his students. As Celestial Fist of Harmony likes to point out, his only students are the corpses of his defeated opponents, recipients of the generous wisdom of his fist. This, he says, means that his mastery is perfect, for none ever require a second lesson from him. They now know absolute inner peace.

The logic is unclear, but few choose to debate him. Despite having studied at all the world's hidden temples of the martial arts (and having then annihilated three of them) despite having mastered all of the secret, lost techniques, Celestial Fist of Harmony seems to have found little spiritual enlightenment. He jokes that people always seem shocked that someone who has spent his whole life learning how to beat people up should have learned so little inner peace. But he is still seeking, he adds. Perhaps if he beats enough people up it will come to him. He tells a lot of jokes like this, for he is a very jovial fellow who can find the lighter side of almost any situation, so matter how horrifying or nightmarish.

He offers a lot of rationalizations for his constant bad behavior, his whimsical cruelty, his desire to smash everything good and decent into tiny fragments. Most of his explanations are demented blasphemy or scary paradoxes. He will say, for example,

that the Buddha states the essence of satori is to choose a path or spiritual discipline and then stray from it as far as possible.

Celestial Fist of Harmony has chosen the path of the righteous, and so strays as far from it as he can in order to seek Nirvana. This is of course utter rubbish, and completely inconsistent with other things he says, but he cares as little for truth or consistency as he does for the sanctity of human life. He is a legend in the Far East. Everyone in the martial arts world has heard of the Celestial Fist of Harmony. Few choose to believe that such a person could exist. If there is some kind of secret tournament of martial arts champions in your world, this is the person you face at the end of it.

When he isn't facing other secret masters in single combat or finding martial arts champions to test his skills against, he wanders the world sowing havoc and woe. Mostly found in Asia, he prefers wild and remote areas, but can turn up anywhere.

We don't know quite how Captain Sinister found him, but we do know that the Captain made a personal project out of tracking down the legend and bringing him on board. In fact he would have brought Celestial Fist of Harmony into the Core Command Working Group if the Steering Committee hadn't expressed its disapproval of bringing non-whites into the fold. As it is the team holds him at arm's length, but uses him whenever a really big scary martial artist is required. And he is indeed as scary as anyone could ask for. Always smiling, always ready to erupt into savagery, a cruel witticism always on his lips, he makes extremely unnerving company. In combat he is utterly savage, sadistic and ruthless, unless it occurs to him on a whim to be honorable instead. He kills indiscriminately, but sometimes will inexplicably show mercy. The reasons he offers for both are equally flippant and depraved. His personal history is murky—he claims that everyone who ever knew him in his early life is dead, the casualties of a bet he really shouldn't have placed with another master. This seems to be true. He'll tell you his real name if you ask, but no one seems to know anything about his childhood. We would not be at all surprised if it was filled with ominous

portents and shocking violence. The rest of his life certainly has been.

Adventures With Celestial Fist of Harmony: 1) Infinity's Radiant Heart—Beware!

After thirty years of painstaking effort, North Korea's most famous poet in exile, Kim Dae Kwok, has finished his masterpiece—the Radiant Heart of Infinity Sutra. It's one of the greatest works the human imagination has ever produced, on a par with the Iliad or Hamlet or the Mahabharata. Celestial Fist of Harmony learns of this and tells the Legion of the Damned that this poem could change the world, bringing inner peace to millions. Who knows what unpredictable, unwanted changes this could cause in the state of things? The Fist wants the Aleph to destroy the poem and obliterate it from the memory of anyone who has read it. Instead he gets assigned to the job himself. He sends cruel and mocking threats to the hapless poet, upbraiding him for such a prideful endeavor. It is too easy to seek inner peace through art and beauty and song. Better that he should learn the dharma of loss and despair, gain enlightenment through hardship, disappointment and pain. Celestial Fist of Harmony would be happy to instruct him in this path, and will arrive shortly. Perhaps Kwok should spend his final hours with his poem, for both of them will be ashes soon.

For his part, Kwok is far beyond caring if he lives or dies, whether his poem survives or any other such mundane concern. All is illusion. Only dharma is real.

His personal assistant (who is also his niece) isn't nearly so sanguine about Kwok's impending doom, and runs weeping to the PCs for help. As it just so happens, Kwok runs a convenience store in the PCs' home city, which the PCs themselves have frequented many times, without having any idea who the serene old man behind the counter really is. Even a renowned master poet needs a day-job, it seems.

2) The Parable of the Wayward Master and the Exquisite Shoes

Celestial Fist of Harmony stands on a bridge, blocking traffic. A relatively low-

powered PC finds him there, ranting and bellowing that anyone who wants to cross must first either strike him or be struck by him. A ruined car steams and pings beside him. The whole front end has been punched in—the imprint of his fist is visible in the grill. This is what being struck by him would be like. Traffic is backing up. No one is willing to try hitting him, let alone being hit by him. The police have yet to arrive, there are no other superheroes around to back up the PC. He sees them, grins and beckons them forward. *“You there!”* he yells *“You have very nice shoes. Now strike me or be struck by me so that you may pass. Which is it? Choose!”*

If the PC chooses to strike him, he will not resist or evade their blow, unless they are obviously super-strong or use some kind of ranged attack on him. If they manage to hit him, however lightly, he will laugh and say that this is the getting of wisdom. They may pass. But, he adds, his time is valuable, and now they must repay him for the lesson. *“Either let me strike you in return, or give me those fine shoes you wear.”* If the PCs protest, he will attack them, crying *“Give me your shoes! I desire them!”*

He will attempt to wrestle them to the ground and make off with their footwear. This would be an excellent time for their teammates to arrive on the scene and come to their aid. Should he succeed in making off with their shoes, then the next time the PCs encounter him he is wearing them, no matter how ludicrous or inappropriate this looks. These are his shoes now and he is very fond of them, he explains. The PC with the desirable footwear can spare themselves a lot of pain and humiliation if they simply agree to let him strike them. For if at any point the PC agrees to let him hit them, he will leer menacingly, pull his fist slowly back, and then give them a light gentle tap. Then he says *“This is dharma. Next time I see you, I kill you for this.”*

Then he laughs, loud and scary. And then he leaves. He will not attempt to kill them the next time he sees them, despite his threat (unless that's the assignment). He's actually impressed with their bravery,

and will tell them so the next time they meet. This does not mean that he has become their friend, or that he will go easier on them in a fight.

3) A Thousand Steps to Dharma

Celestial Fist of Harmony sends a challenge to a PC martial artist in the form of a poem. It seems to be written in blood on a Bhuddist monk's robe. The poem is written in an archaic form of Chinese that the Fist doesn't understand as well as he thinks, but with a little work it can be translated. Far up in the mountains of Bhutan, it says, clinging to the edge of a precipice, stands the tiny Chonga Goompa monastery, whose monks are said to have achieved a nigh-perfect mastery of inner peace, the greatest in the world. The Fist supposes that in this case, if they have mastered peace, then all he can teach them is the Satori to be found in violence, the dharma of death, the sutra that is written in blood and intoned in screams of anguish. If the PC does not agree with the Celestial Fist of Harmony, he need only present himself at Chonga Goompa and discuss the matter there, at the foot of the thousand steps that lead into the sanctuary. They shall debate it through the one universal language—violence, for such is the purest way to engage in a philosophical dialogue of this importance. But they should make haste, for he is eager to begin instructing the monks and if the PC isn't there yet when the Fist arrives he will not wait to begin the lesson. PCs who take Celestial Fist of Harmony up on his challenge will face suspicious border guards, dizzying altitude, endless treks over snowy passes and periodic assaults by a ruffianly gang of yak-herds whom the Fist has paid to waylay them at every turn. Finally, they will confront Celestial Fist of Harmony at the foot of the slippery, crooked 1,000 steps that lead up to the gate of Chonga Goompa. The monastery itself is old and poor, drafty and dingy, distinguished only by the incredible wisdom and sagacity of its monks. They are completely without defenses and will not even pause from their prayers if they are being slain. The Fist must not be allowed to pass those steps.

THE TERROR TWINS



"We wish the world had just one throat!"

Real Names: Chad and Muffy McCormick-Klodd

PL: 20

Str: 22 (+6) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 44 (+17)

Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 26 (+8)

Initiative: 6

Attack Bonus: 18 **Defense:** 13

Toughness Save: 17 (14 Impervious)

Fortitude Save: 17 **Reflexes Save:** 20

Willpower Save: 20

Skills: Bluff 15 (+23), Disguise 10 (+18), Intimidate 15 (+23), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 25 (+26), Notice 5 (+9), Stealth 12 (+14)

Feats: Diehard, Distract (Linked to Bluff), Fascinate (Linked to Intimidate), Fearless, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple,

Improved Initiative, Startle, Taunt

Powers: Additional Limbs 4 (Can suddenly sprout up to 10 extra limbs if they feel like it), Comprehend 3 (Languages, Animals, Plants), Immunity 11 (Life Support, plus Immunity to Aging and Critical Hits), Impervious Protection 14, Magic 15 (Spells: Fog of Forgetfulness [Blanks out one of the target's memories if they fail a Willpower Save vs DC 25], Alternate Powers: Illusion, Invisibility [Visual], Power Feats: Illusion is Selective) Shapeshifting 18 (Extra: Free Action), Strike (Claws and Fangs) 8 (Extra: Mighty), Super-Senses (Acute Hearing, Magical Awareness, Blindsight [Magical Sense], Darkvision, Detect Life, Scent, Ultra-Hearing), Telepathy 18, Teleport 9 (Extended Range: 20,000 miles—anywhere on Earth; Power Feats: Easy; Extras: Accurate, Portal; Flaw: Long Range [can't make ranged teleports as a Move Action, can only teleport their Extended Range distance as a full-round action])

Headquarters: A very nice brownstone on Park Avenue, full of horrendous things.

Size: Large

Hardness: 30

Features: Concealed from prying eyes (and see the section on the brownstone's Superpowers, as well). It holds Living Space for the Terror Twins and 18 guests; an empty Garage; Holding Cells; a Library containing a single book that holds whatever knowledge you might care to research; a Pool that I'm afraid you might not actually want to go swimming in; its own separate Power System, which, being fueled by the dark energies of Hell is much less prone to blackouts than the rest of New York City's power grid, and the following Powers: Animate Objects 10 (sometimes the house's furniture or a guest's possessions will come to life and behave in startling ways), Concealment (Auditory, Visual, Gamma-Ray scanners, Hearing, Infrared, Radar, Smell, Sonar, Ultravision and X-ray Vision), Force Field 10 (invisible barriers which appear at random here and there as guests attempt to flee some of the house's more surprising features) gruesome Illusions 12 (Extra: Selective) stalk the halls and rooms, Obscure 10 (Auditory and/or Visual—rooms sometimes fill up with mist, plunge into total

darkness or are flooded with horrendous, ear-splitting screams), Strike 10 (the house's stairways have a mischievous way of dumping people down them and doors will sometimes playfully bite a visitor in half), Super-Movement 3 (Dimensional Movement, can reach any dimension (Extras: Useable on Others) although the various dimensional portals in the house lead anywhere you would like to go, Teleport 9 (Extended Range: 20,000 miles—anywhere on Earth; Power Feats: Easy; Extras: Accurate, Portal; Flaws: Long Range [can't make ranged teleports as a Move Action, can only teleport the Extended Range distance as a full-round action], Limited Power [Can only Teleport you into other properties that the Terror Twins own—and at the moment there aren't any])

Complications: Far too evil for their own good, will get distracted in the middle of a plan by the opportunity to do someone harm, even if this makes them kill off their own allies or puts them at some other disadvantage.

Drawbacks: Disabled (Can't leave their own property [but they're working to accumulate the points required to buy this one off]), Moderately Vulnerable (to sacred things—it doesn't matter what gods they are sacred to, just so long as they aren't the gods of evil).

Background: When Miss Hadley McCormick-Klodd gave birth to a litter of eight screaming demonic larvae in 1962, the rumors about her family became difficult to ignore. The McCormick-Klodd had always maintained in polite society that their dedication to Satanism was purely pro-forma—a matter of keeping the family traditions rather than any sincere commitment to the forces of darkness, and that their habit of inbreeding had more to do with preserving the family fortune than with any kind of blasphemous and depraved secret rituals. Their wealth and status were such that few in Society chose to question them. Yet the unfortunate matter of the octuplets placed an intolerable strain on the family's position. There were whispers, there were snickers, and soon no one in New York would visit them.

For their part, the octuplets were lively and strong, crawling and shrieking and murdering household pets before they were even a week old, their features blurring and shifting, new arms, legs and less easily described appendages sprouting from their little bodies at whim. An early effort to house them all in the same nursery went astray when the smallest two were devoured in their beds by the others. The remaining six were each given to separate nannies.

Miss Hadley was confined to a sanatorium within a few days of giving birth, her father was stuck down by a bolt of lightning while strolling up Park Avenue a month later, so the sextuplets were left in the care of their Uncle Anson, who maintained as safe a distance as possible, conducting the family's affairs from his summer home in the Hamptons and never venturing into Manhattan itself. Yet despite his precautions, within three years the quintuplets (there were only five of them now, after having killed their weakest remaining sibling and its nanny in a test of their growing mental powers) hired an attorney who got in touch with Anson and asked him to surrender control of the family finances to them. He hastily acceded, but not hastily enough, and was found torn to pieces by his pet corgis some weeks later.

The McCormick-Klodd quint was poised to become the leading light of Central Park West, with their vast sums of money, inhuman charm and ability to assume whatever shape they liked. Indeed, there is some speculation that their access to America's greatest financial center and its wealthiest citizens might have given them a good deal of influence over the affairs of the nation and perhaps the world, in time. But it was not to be.

A mystically oriented superhero team called the "Sisterhood of the Seventh Seal" sensed the growing threat and moved to neutralize it. They managed to imprison the quint inside their New York brownstone, and then erase it from the public consciousness. The quint brooded in their invisible Park Avenue prison for the next twenty-five years.

We don't know how or why the

Steering Committee found out about them, but in 1988 they somehow managed to make contact with the lost house on Park Avenue and its dreadful inhabitants, and to strike a deal with them. There are apparently two of the quintts left—the strongest and most ruthless ones. The Twins remain as much of a threat to mankind as ever and the Legion is under instructions to let them out of their prison only in dire emergencies. This hasn't come up yet, but the Twins are busily trying to engineer the right kind of emergency even as I write these words.

If this situation gets out of control, it is hard to see what could be done about it. No one really knows how the Sisterhood of the Seventh Seal managed to defeat them the first time—the few members of the Sisterhood who survived the battle all died of their injuries not long thereafter. In any case the McCormick-Klodd children were only three years old at the time. Who knows what they're like at age forty-two?

In fact, if the Player Characters ever have a chance to find out, they will discover that the threat from the Twins is overrated. They are still adolescents and haven't come into their full power yet. What's more, they are so unbelievably evil that it actually keeps them from getting anything accomplished. They are forever getting distracted by some minor (if sickening) act of beastliness, or tormenting one of their own henchmen in some pointlessly awful way instead of fighting their opponents. Hopeless at remembering objectives, any mission they are sent on will devolve into a random bloodbath long before they reach the goal. If they had managed to infiltrate New York Society, they would never have been able to do anything as subtle as taking over the stock market or subverting presidential elections, they just would have caused a lot of murders and suicides in the nation's upper echelons before getting bored and going on a public rampage.

In person they are leeringly evil, unless they have assumed someone else's shape, in which case they will stay perfectly "in character", emulating them with absolute fidelity, until their self-control breaks down and they become leeringly evil once more.

There is nothing that is beyond them, but they will never take hostages in a combat situation. They find it impossible to understand the concept that one living being might want to keep another from being harmed, so it will never occur to them to take a hostage.

Adventures With the Terror Twins:

1) Tower of Terror

The McCormick-Klodd twins have inherited a piece of land in the PCs home city, thanks to a complicated and obscure clause in the will of a local real-estate magnate. He cut his children out of the inheritance and unbeknownst to him, Chad and Muffy (they're distant cousins) are his closest living relatives. The Terror Twins point out to the authorities of Hell that this means they can leave their brownstone and venture on to the property—the spells which bind them say that they must remain forever in their house, and now the high-rise apartment building which stands on that spot is also their house. This is a dubious argument, but the McCormick-Klodd have an excellent lawyer, who applies for a stay of any decision on enacting the resultant finding. It will take about twenty-four hours for this request to make its way through Hell's torturous bureaucracy and get rejected. In the meantime, the Terror Twins are free to roam the halls of the building.

As luck would have it, they appear on Saturday night, just as a debutante's birthday party gets underway in the penthouse. There will be lots of rich, pretty young teenagers wandering around up there, ripe for the taking. So after the Terror Twins seal all the building's exits and make certain lethal modifications to the elevators and fire escapes, they're going to attend the party. They will assume people's shapes and provoke kids into doing terrible things to one another before they get too excited and turn the whole thing into an orgy of carnage. Perhaps the PCs will have been able to stop them by then.

The moment a mystically-powered superhero breaks their way into the building, the Terror Twins will start playing cat and mouse with them, which at least will

distract them from the hapless kids in the penthouse. Horribly powerful though the Terror Twins are, the PCs have one potential ace up their sleeve. If they figure out what has happened here, they can point out to the Terror Twins that this building doesn't belong to them. Just the land it stands on. They will scream and vanish, leaving a portal open behind them for two rounds, which really brave characters can use to follow them back into their New York townhouse. In any case their demonic lawyer will show up in 24 hours and regretfully tell them to vacate the property. You can fudge the time a bit if the PCs are in serious trouble.

2) Nip, Tuck, Chop, Hack and Suck

The Terror Twins have made contact with the mind of famed Hollywood plastic surgeon Dr. Mervin Dick. Dr. Dick is a heavy drug user and whenever he takes enough cocaine, his mind begins to throb on the unclean frequency where the Terror Twins can reach it. They've seeped in through the bleeding holes he has worn in his soul and filled his veins with inspiration. Dr. Dick is building them a brand new clinic with a whole new approach to plastic surgery. But the Twins' standards of beauty are painfully exacting, and may not be quite what the ladies of Beverly Hills expect. The New Cruelty Clinic and Spa is about to become a veritable hospital of horrors. Once the first round of celebrity patients are admitted, the doors and windows will be bricked up from the outside and the fun will begin.

There are enough stones from the old McCormick-Klodd townhouse in the clinic's walls for the Twins to be able to stalk its halls and sample the mischief in person. But if the Player Characters can force their way inside the clinic and break the link to Dr. Dick's brain, there might still be time to save the cream of Hollywood before it gets drained off and lapped up by the Terror Twins.

Dr. Mervin Dick

PL: 6

Str: 12 (+1) Dex: 18 (+4) Con: 14 (+2) Int: 14 (+2) Wis: 12 (+1) Cha: 16 (+3) Initiative: 4 Attack Bonus: 6 Defense: 6 Toughness Save: 2 Fortitude Save: 2 Reflexes Save: 6 Willpower Save: 2
--

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Concentration 4 (+5), Computers 1 (+3), Diplomacy 7 (+10), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 5 (+7), Medicine 11 (+12), Notice 5 (+6), Profession (plastic surgeon) 11 (+13)

Feats: Distract (linked to Bluff)

Complications: Badly addicted to cocaine, will do anything to get more. Anything at all.

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